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Editorial

Papers presented in this volume are an assorted collection of contributions from different parts of the Baptist world. Essays are representative of integrative baptistic theologising. They present contextual perspectives on a range of issues in Baptist ecclesiology, theology, spirituality and history.

Dr Michael Parsons reflects on the covenanted Baptist ecclesiology of the local gathering community which is truly Trinitarian, worship centred and concrete. Taking a lead from historic development of and contemporary thought on Baptist tradition, he explores aspects of relational ecclesiology and calls for further reflections on its relevance in a post-modern context.

Prof Mirosław Patalon takes a close look at the theology of Polish Catholic theologian Father Waław Hryniewicz. Considering Hryniewicz's epistemology of complementariness, views on the processual character of reality and religious pluralism in inter-religious dialogue, Patalon finds intriguing points of convergence between Hryniewicz's theology and the philosophical theology of the process theologian John B Cobbs.

In her essay, Lina Andronovienė skilfully relates the particular and local of a minority contemporary Lithuanian Baptist community to features of identity common to all Baptists. Taking her lead from biblical themes of 1 Peter and using original hymnody as her means of inquiry into primary theology of the community, she singles out two key themes of 'strangeness' and 'suffering' as formative for Lithuanian Baptist spirituality and relates them to the traditional cultural heritage.

Dr Albert Wardin traces the way in which Baptist life spread within the Russian empire in the nineteenth century, taking in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and other Baltic regions, Poland, Ukraine and the Caucasus. The areas of German Baptist expansion and the links with the emerging Slavic Baptist mission are carefully traced. In thinking about mission in these areas, a crucial conclusion that Albert Wardin draws – one that has continuing relevance – is that foreign missionaries were not the primary agents in spreading the Baptist message in Russia. Johan Oncken and others certainly saw the benefit of financial support from abroad for native Baptist work. But as then, so now, the most effective witness was that undertaken by local lay people and evangelists.

The Revd Dr Parush R Parushev, Academic Dean, IBTS

An understanding of covenanted church: Is there a contemporary relevance?

Introduction

We live, in the West, at any rate, in a fast-changing culture and society, and in an age of changing paradigms or core metaphors of meaning and imagination. This is self-evident. However, as a denomination, Baptists have always argued that some things (*not* everything!) should remain unchanged – they are best left as they are – and that appears at variance with the prevailing mood of the time. For example, generally, we maintain an understanding of church as associated with both the idea and the experience of covenant, of church as community. Indeed, more than that, we have always held that the covenant is essential or integral to our ecclesiology – both the divine over-arching covenant and the more localised covenant between committed members. We have held on to this belief fairly consistently and almost tenaciously at times since the beginning of the seventeenth century – four hundred years – so it's well rooted in our denominational and theological DNA.

However, the question is whether it ought to be. Some are arguing that commitment and close relationship are not very post-modern concepts and asking whether the church ought to refashion its ecclesial understanding to suit the times in which we live. The present short article is a brief exploration of this question, meant merely to be suggestive for further reflection. It begins by outlining early Baptist thought on covenant and moves to contemporary expressions and development of that theology. Then it calls into question those who want to dispense with covenant/relational models of church community, suggesting key theological ideas that need to be taken into account if we are to be both true to our past and true to the kerygmatic call of Christ to be contemporary in the world.

Early Baptist understanding

The early English Baptists believed in a covenanted church by which they meant a gathered church of those who had covenanted together under Christ as Head of the church. In his excellent historical overview, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, Roger Hayden speaks of this, mentioning the church in Gainsborough as an example, in which the member William Bradford described them:

as the Lord's free people, [having] joined themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in the fellowship of the Gospel, to walk in all his ways, made known, or to be made known unto them, (according to their best endeavours) whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them.¹

This is a crucial statement. It indicates the importance of intentionality about membership of the church – they were ‘the Lord's free people’. We might notice, too, the centrality of both Christ and of the gospel in this comment. Of particular significance, though, are the prominence and the centrality of the covenant for membership of the local church (‘a covenant of the Lord’), which appears to be evidenced in unity and sharing (‘the fellowship of the Gospel’) and its daily authenticity, for it clearly cost them to covenant in this way. Here is clear expression that the concept of church at this time was of a regenerate community. For instance, John Smyth writes:

[T]he outward church consists of *penitent persons only*, and of such as believing in Christ bring forth fruits worthy [of] amendment of life. ... [A]ll penitent and faithful Christians are brethren in the communion of outward life, wheresoever they live, by what name soever they are known.²

Thomas Helwys speaks in similar vein:

[T]he Church of Christ is a company of faithful people, separated from the world by the word and Spirit of God, being knit unto the Lord and one another, by baptism, upon their own confession of the faith and sins.³

Indeed, the theological undergirding of this early concept of church was the eternal covenant of God's grace as it became actualised, concrete and contemporary in the life of believers joined together in church. Interestingly, in his developing theological understanding, John Smyth changed the notion of baptism (as entrance to local church membership) from being a seal of God's grace, which in itself is a rather passive concept, to being a more active declaration of entering into a covenant that had already been received.⁴

¹ Quoted in Roger Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, sec. ed. (Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2005), p. 19.

² Quoted by N.G. Wright, *Free Church, Free State: The Positive Baptist Vision* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005), p. 56, emphasis added.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁴ See Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, p. 23. See also, p. 21.

The church as a covenant community, sharing God's covenant love in Christ, understood itself to be accountable to the God of the covenant, and (as a natural corollary to this accountability) to each other in covenant relationship. According to Hayden, before adopting a General Baptist position, John Smyth's understanding of the church was dominated by the covenant idea, defining it as 'a visible community of saints', that is, as 'two or more joined together by covenant with God and themselves'. Consequently, Christians had what Smyth termed a 'duty of love' to each other as believers.⁵ Indebted to the early Separatist, Francis Johnson, Smyth reduced the idea of the church to three primary, defining characteristics. Two of the characteristics that defined the church were that members were to be converted people (that is, in Smyth's language, 'saints only'), and that they shared 'communion in all holy things and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the maintaining of that communion'. But, significantly, for the present study, the third characteristic was that 'the true form' of church was 'the uniting of [members] together in the covenant'.⁶

The *London Confession* (1644) appears to hold to the same covenant idea with a similar emphasis on mutuality and support. For example, it describes the church as:

a company of visible Saints called and separated from the world ...
joyned to the Lord, and each other, by mutuall agreement ... being
fitly compact and knit together, according to the effectuall working
of every part, to the edification of itselſe in love.⁷

Similarly, the important *Second London Confession* speaks of the Lord calling out from the world those who join the church as members. It makes the causal statement that this is done, not only for worship, but also *that* they may 'walk in obedience', and 'walk together ... for their mutual edification'. It says that they 'willingly consent to walk together according to the appointment of Christ, giving up themselves, to the Lord and to one another by the will of God'.⁸ Again, the emphasis is upon intentionality, the ecclesial centrality of Christ and a mutual sharing in fellowship created by covenant commitment.

⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

⁶ Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, p. 20.

⁷ *The London Confession* (1644), pp. XXXIII, XXXV.

⁸ *The Second London Confession*, pp. 5, 14.

Later, the *Orthodox Creed* of 1678 continues to hold the covenant idea as central to General Baptist thought.⁹ Roger Hayden spells this out as follows:

The new covenant is the basis for humanity's acceptance before God, since the old covenant has failed. The new covenant in Christ is the foundation for a new relationship between God and humanity, and it is on this that the Church is built. The new covenant is God's 'free grace and love to fallen man' and is freely and fully offered to all men on the terms of the Gospel, viz. repentance and faith.

The practical emphases from this early period include a genuine sense of fellowship and community based on mutual, covenanted commitment to one another and to God, together with a commitment to 'walk together and watch over each other'. This incorporates authentic sharing, care and edification. It is seen in the shared life of the church – including its discipline, of course.¹⁰

Contemporary thought on covenant church

Hayden suggests that the demise of the theological concept of the church as a covenanted community happened much later with the impact upon the church of Evangelicalism, which meant a greater emphasis on individualism and personal option, or choice. He comments that after the rise of Evangelicalism "Church" no longer defined the community of Christ, it simply met an individual's spiritual need.'¹¹ There is some truth in this.

However, despite this assertion, Baptists generally have been and continue to be strident in maintaining a covenant idea of church membership and commitment. For instance, the Baptist Union of Great Britain seems committed to a covenant model of church. The fairly recent publication, *Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship*, appears to demonstrate this. It is explicit in the section 'Reception into Membership' which has the introductory statement, 'We enter into covenant with *them* to share with each other in building up the Church to the glory of God,

⁹ Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, p. 32. Reflecting on early Baptist covenantal thought, G.W. Martin, *The Church: A Baptist View* (London: Baptist Publications, nd.), p. 29, suggests that the 'impact of such a genuine community is incalculable'.

¹⁰ See, for example, Faith Bowers, *A Bold Experiment: The Story of Bloomsbury Chapel and Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 1848–1999* (Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 1999), pp. 173–189. Bowers states that 'gathered community' churches 'composed of members who have a positive commitment to Christ, demand of them godly lives' (p. 173).

¹¹ Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, p. 64.

working alongside one another in his service in the world, and encouraging one another in the love of God.’¹² Changing the metaphor, but maintaining the idea, the church is asked whether it welcomes the candidate into the family of God in this local church. Then, the pertinent question to the members present, ‘Do you promise to love, encourage, strengthen, guide, pray for, and care for’ the candidate as they join the fellowship?’¹³ The covenant concept clearly continues to underline the horizontal responsibilities that members, committed to one another, have towards each other.

Two contemporary Baptist writers continue to suggest a similar mutual commitment and even a covenant understanding of the church. It is to these attempts at contemporary ecclesiology that we now briefly turn.

In his useful volume, *Radical Believers: The Baptist Way of Being the Church*, Paul Beasley-Murray writes of the church as ‘a believers’ church’, giving importance to intentionality following conversion, faith and baptism.¹⁴ He speaks of a reciprocal commitment between (in the first place) ourselves and God – a commitment which is ‘a life-long commitment to the way of Christ’.¹⁵ There follows from this primary commitment, a commitment (in the second place) to the people of Christ:

It means, for instance, that we may no longer look only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phil 2:4). It means that sharing with God’s people who are in need and practising hospitality (Rom 12:13) come to the top of our agenda.¹⁶

Later, he says that, ‘Commitment to Christ, therefore, *inevitably* involves commitment to his people and church membership’.¹⁷

Beasley-Murray is adamant that we look at church with a covenant-focus. This whole matter of church membership, he asserts, is about covenant, ‘First and foremost church membership is about covenant relationships’,¹⁸ indeed, ‘commitment to one another ... is the essence of a church covenant’.¹⁹ In fellowship groups (which for Beasley-Murray

¹² *Patterns and Prayers for Christian Worship. A Guidebook for Worship Leaders* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), p. 104.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹⁴ P. Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers. The Baptist Way of Being the Church* (Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1992), p. 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 21, respectively.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50 – emphasis added. See also, pp. 49, 54.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 55. Interestingly, Beasley-Murray writes this in the context of looking at the covenant made by John Smyth and his followers at Gainsborough in 1606.

epitomise believers' church) the dynamic of relationships (or 'meaningful fellowship') means that 'love can be displayed, life can be shared, maturity can be developed, gifts can be discovered'.²⁰ Later, in his chapter on 'Living the Lordship of Christ', he speaks of an outward, missional movement from covenant relationships to the world: 'In our relationship with others we are called to represent Christ to one another *and the world*'.²¹ We need to return to this important idea below.

More recently, the present Principal of Spurgeon's Baptist College, London, Nigel Wright, agrees. He also speaks of a regenerate church.²² Indeed, he writes that 'The doctrine of salvation defines the doctrine of the church'²³ and insists that it should be seen as 'a gathering church'.²⁴ This nuanced phrase is Wright's understandable attempt to move away from the rather static term 'the gathered church', used in earlier times but not completely out of vogue today. The former is suggestive of dynamic people who are actively light and salt in the world.²⁵ Wright says, 'The gathering church therefore exists as an open community of disciples'.²⁶ In his earlier book, *New Baptists, New Agenda*, Wright says, 'The effective church is the open church':

This seems to me to be a fundamental aspect of effective congregational life: the capacity to build a committed membership while *at the same time* remaining radically and welcomingly open to those as yet beyond.²⁷

Nevertheless, Wright suggests that the members of the church belong to one another (indicating commitment) in 'a covenanted relationship'. He appears consciously to continue the early Baptist position: 'As God has made covenant relationship with us so we are drawn into *explicit and expressed commitment* to each other in the church'.²⁸

²⁰ Ibid., p. 54.

²¹ Ibid., p. 60–61, emphasis added. In his choice of words he appears to be reflecting something of Luther's understanding of believers being *alter Christus*.

²² Wright, *Free Church*, p. 51.

²³ Ibid., p. 55. Again, this comment comes in a section in which he reflects on the ecclesiology of both John Smyth and Thomas Helwys (pp. 55–7). See also, D L Smith, *All God's People. A Theology of the Church* (Wheaton, Illinois: Bridgepoint, 1996), p. 376.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 49–69.

²⁵ To speak of a 'gathering church' rather than 'gathered church' encourages a dynamic in which the community has an identity defined by its centre, Jesus Christ, and an inclusive circumference rather than an exclusive boundary. See Keith G. Jones, *A Believing Church* (Didcot: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1998), pp. 38–41.

²⁶ Wright, *Free Church*, p. 51.

²⁷ N.G. Wright, *New Baptists, New Agenda* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), pp. 75, 76. respectively – emphasis added.

²⁸ Wright, *Free Church*, p. 58, emphasis added. See also, Wright, *New Baptists*, p. 79.

Interestingly, in translating this typically Baptist ecclesiology, Wright argues that the present system of membership is inadequate for the church today. He suggests that we need to think in terms of process, envisaging the church as a series of concentric circles with a ‘very definite core both of beliefs, values and committed people’. He distinguishes between ‘community membership’ and ‘covenant membership’. Earlier he had spoken of these as ‘formal’ and ‘organic’ membership.²⁹ The former is open to all, the latter to those committed together in covenant relationship. The former sees people genuinely cared for in the church’s pastoral oversight while allowing them to move in the process at their own speed; the latter (based on willing commitment) is intended ‘to be demanding of people’s discipleship’.³⁰ Then we might envisage a healthy dynamic ‘that draws people in from the circumference to the centre’, from a more formal membership to an organic one.³¹ And, as the early General Baptist model indicated, Wright asserts that membership is about relationships:

We are engaged with each other in such a way that we receive from each other aspects of the manifold grace of God, setting an example to each other.... This is the continual activity of the church of Christ, to be a discipling community.³²

We have seen, then, that there is a commitment to a covenant model of church amongst Baptists. The question that confronts us is how this covenant model ‘works’ for today’s generation.

Is the covenant model sufficient for a post-modern society?

It is noticeable that there *are* writers who are questioning what it means to belong to a community in post-modern culture. Myers, for instance, asserts that ‘people crave connection, not contracts’,³³ thereby denying any significant relationship between commitment and community: ‘When we search to belong, we aren’t really looking for commitment. We simply want to connect.’³⁴ Likewise, Pete Ward suggests that attempts to develop community in ‘liquid modernity’ are an illusion – though he *does* maintain

²⁹ See Wright, *New Baptists*, pp. 76–9.

³⁰ Wright, *Free Church*, p. 61.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³³ J.R. Myers, *The Search to Belong. Rethinking Intimacy, Community, and Small Groups* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), p. 27.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

the central importance of relationships.³⁵ His conclusion is that the desire that used to create community now creates communication instead.³⁶

Notwithstanding, others question the prioritising of belief above belonging in churches relevant to postmodern culture. Brian Harris, for example, asserts the central importance of community-belonging while holding an open, missional ecclesiology.³⁷ Christopher Walker agrees, stating that missional church is ‘First and foremost ... a community’.³⁸ And, perhaps this change in perspective is the key to our translating early Baptist theology to today’s church. I believe, given the biblical images of church³⁹ and the theological arguments sketched above, that the covenant/commitment model for the church as community has mileage in contemporary society, but particularly in its *mediatorial* and *missional* role in the changed missional context.

In his essay, ‘The “Gift” of the Church. *Ecclesia Crucis*, *Peccatrix Maxima*, and the *Missio Dei*’, M. Jenkins, says that ‘The church exists in the history of the world for the sake of *missio Dei*, and for no other reason’. Though I would argue that the church has two functions – doxological and missional – he is essentially right.⁴⁰ Community today, based upon covenant and commitment, is essential, but needs to demonstrate an *outward* focus and priority. As a membership we don’t live for ourselves; we live for others.

In much of what Nigel Wright says he unashamedly follows the contemporary ecclesiological thought of Jürgen Moltmann. For example, Wright speaks of Moltmann’s book, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, as ‘the best “Baptist” book on the church available despite not having been written by a Baptist’.⁴¹ In both that book and his later work, *The Open Church*, Moltmann calls for the friendship of Jesus to be the key to

³⁵ P Ward, *Liquid Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson / Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), pp. 24, 46, respectively. By ‘liquid modernity’ he refers to what others speak of as ‘post-modernity’.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 88. Also, p. 90. See also, S. Radley, *Place: Church and Mission* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1997), pp. 7–9, 16.

³⁷ See, for example, B.S. Harris, ‘From “Behave, Believe, Belong” to “Belong, Believe, Behave” – A Missional Journey for the 21st Century’ in M. Parsons (ed.), *Text and Task: Scripture and Mission* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005), pp. 204–217.

³⁸ C. Walker, *Seeking Relevant Churches for the 21st Century* (Melbourne: JBCE, 1997), p. 30. See, particularly, pp. 25–38.

³⁹ See the seminal work, P.S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), particularly, chapters 3–6.

⁴⁰ M. Jenkins, ‘The “Gift” of the Church. *Ecclesia Crucis*, *Peccatrix Maxima*, and the *Missio Dei*’ in J.G. Stackhouse, Jr. (ed.), *Evangelical Ecclesiology. Reality or Illusion?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 2003), pp. 179–209, particularly p. 208.

⁴¹ Wright, *New Baptists*, p. 64. See J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1977).

membership in a missional context.⁴² The following statement is worth quoting, ‘The church will not overcome its present crisis through reform of the administration of the sacraments, or from the reform of its ministries. It will overcome this crisis through the rebirth of practical fellowship.’⁴³

James McClendon also writes concerning membership in the light of the church’s missional calling, but he does so with a realistic, helpful and biblical concern for our pneumatological-eschatological situation.⁴⁴ He, too, insists on an intentional church membership, speaking of ‘a disciple church’⁴⁵ – however, he does not explicitly speak of covenanted church. His concern is on the time in which we find ourselves, and the presence of the Holy Spirit among us, significantly, speaking of this as ‘the Spirit’s koinonic presence’.⁴⁶ The community ‘lives between the times’; but notice that its task is in ‘adapting, adjusting, transforming, interpreting so that the church can be the church *even as it helps the world to see itself as world*’.⁴⁷ Notice, though, that the fellowship of the Spirit implies a *common life* whose practices suit, not this present age, but the age to come – a community at once redeemed and redemptive.⁴⁸

The other aspect of McClendon’s ecclesiology is that he centres it on Christ. ‘[The church is] a company of equals, equally gifted by God’s Spirit, equally responsible for the community-building whose accomplishment is the fullness of Christ.’ Miraslov Volf speaks in a similar way, ‘For in so assembling, Christians attest that Christ is the determining ground of their lives – that in him they have found freedom, orientation, and power.’⁴⁹ Likewise, Barger argues for a church membership that is witness to the resurrection life of Christ.⁵⁰

So there are theologians (some of whom come from a covenant model, others who don’t), who generally speak of membership in similar ways. They all emphasise the fellowship aspect, though some are beginning

⁴² See, for example, Moltmann, *The Church*, pp. 115, 116–18, 289–99, 314–17; and, *The Open Church*, pp. 9, 29, 50–63, 125.

⁴³ Moltmann, *The Church*, p. 317.

⁴⁴ See J.W. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, ‘Doctrine’ (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), particularly, pp. 366–71.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 371, 367, respectively.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 367, emphasis added.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 366, emphasis original.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 369. M. Volf, ‘Community Formation as an Image of the Triune God: A Congregational Model of Church Order and Life’, in R.N. Longenecker (ed.), *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), p. 217. See also, M. Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 137–45.

⁵⁰ Rick Barger, *A New and Right Spirit. Creating an Authentic Church in a Consumer Culture* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2005).

to speak of the crucial missional role in which such members are to be engaged.

Reflections

Stanley Grenz says, ‘No true community of faith fails to set its sights *outward* toward the world in which it is called to live’.⁵¹ It is that dynamic combination of and relationship between community, on the one hand, and mission, on the other, that demonstrates that the covenant idea is both valid and relevant to our post-modern world.

In his seminal work, *Transforming Mission*, Bosch suggests that ‘Christian mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world.’⁵² Later he articulates again more fully, ‘Mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus. It is the good news of God’s love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.’⁵³ Certainly, though Baptists ‘still feel the double pull of social responsibility issues and mission’,⁵⁴ contemporary Baptist writers would underline the central significance of holistic mission in today’s society – including social action (promoting justice, social welfare, healing, education and peace in the world) – as well as evangelism. In this divinely given task the church *as community* seeks to transcend barriers of gender, language, race, class, age and culture.

In an excellent article that addresses the effects of post-modernism on the church, the Australian, Peter Corney says that we need first to show that Christianity meets the deepest and most profound needs of people. Because people are less linear in their approach to communication and knowledge than the previous generation, they are more interested in our personal narratives – in our story.

Connected with this is the importance that this generation places on relationships. Presenting the Gospel in relational terms, and in the context of relationships, will be helpful. Authentic Christian community will be crucial. People need to see and experience the Gospel lived. When all ideologies are suspect, and when family and

⁵¹ S.J. Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1998), p. 224, emphasis added.

⁵² D.J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991), p. 9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 519. See also, W.A. Dyrness, *Let the Earth Rejoice!* (Pasadena: Fuller Seminary Press, 1991), p. 190.

⁵⁴ Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage*, p. 268.

community have broken down, Christian communities which are loving, caring and open will be profoundly attractive.⁵⁵

The characteristics and the values of such a community people derive from the life of Christ and the empowering of the Holy Spirit and the Father's love and will be worked out within the church and in the wider circles of the denomination and the world – a world which needs to see the love and grace of God in concrete terms: at once prophetic, inclusive, sacrificial and missional, centred on true worship of the living God.

Dr Michael Parsons was, until recently, lecturer at Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia, and is now living in England.

⁵⁵ P. Corney, 'Have you got the right address? Post-Modernism and the Gospel', *GRID* (1995), pp. 1–3. The article's title is derived from a comment by Helmut Thielicke, 'The Gospel must be constantly forwarded to a new address, because the recipient is repeatedly changing place of residence'.

Theologies of John B. Cobb and Wacław Hryniewicz Points of convergence

The purpose of this article is to present the points of convergence between process theology, as specifically expounded by John B. Cobb, and the theology of Wacław Hryniewicz. In Poland, the analysis of process philosophy and theology has been carried out for years by a group of scholars affiliated with the Catholic University of Lublin, Papal Theological Academy in Kraków and the University of Silesia. Among them, the works of Józef Życiński, Piotr Gutowski and Rafał S. Niziński deserve a special mention.¹ Years ago, Whitehead's thought was reflected in the writings of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz and Roman Ingarden.² The year 2003 witnessed the establishment of the Katowice-based Whitehead Metaphysical Society which organises regular academic conferences devoted to process philosophy and theology.³ At the same time, it seems that very few people in Poland actually practice this theology and certainly none are officially regarded as its representatives. This may perhaps indicate a general weakness of Polish theology, characterised by a strong tendency to abide within the boundaries of ecclesiastical correctness.

Against this background, Wacław Hryniewicz must certainly be considered an exception and even though calling him a process theologian would not be entirely adequate, I view him as coming closest to this trend among Polish thinkers. I have particularly in mind issues related to complementariness as the gnoseological principle, the processual character of reality and the relation of Christianity to other religions. Father Wacław Hryniewicz (born 1936) is an outstanding Polish theologian, author of numerous books and professor of the Catholic University of Lublin. In

¹ See J. Życiński, *Teizm i filozofia analityczna*, t. II (Kraków: Znak, 1988); J. Życiński, *Bóg Abrahama i Whiteheada* (Tarnów: Biblos, 1992); J. Życiński (ed.), *Bóg i przyroda w filozofii procesu* (Kraków: Znak, 1992); P. Gutowski, *Filozofia procesu i jej metafizyka. Studium metafizyki Ch. Hartshorne'a* (Lublin: Wydaw, KUL, 1995); R.S. Niziński, *Miedzy teizmem a panteizmem. Charlesa Hartshorne'a procesualna filozofia Boga* (Lublin: Wydaw, KUL, 2002). See also J. Jusiak, *Filozofia nauki i teoria poznania Alfreda Northa Whiteheada* (Lublin: Wydaw, UMCS, 1992); G. Grzmot-Bilski, *Idea racjonalności w filozofii A.N. Whiteheada* (Bydgoszcz: WSP, 1996); J. Mączka, *Od matematyki do filozofii. Twórcza droga Alfreda N. Whiteheada* (Tarnów: Biblos, 1998); T. Komendziński, *O myśleniu procesualnym. Charles Hartshorne i Charles Pierce* (Toruń: Wydaw, UMK, 2003); T.G. Weinandy, *Czy Bóg cierpi* (Poznań: W Drodze, 2003).

² See Marek Rosiak, *Spór o substancjalizm. Studia z ontologii Ingardena i metafizyki Whiteheada* (Łódź: Wydaw, UŁ, 2003).

³ See Bogdan Ogródnik and Wojciech Gródek OFM (eds.), *Studia Whiteheadiana. Polskie badania nad filozofią A. N. Whiteheada* (Kraków: WNPAT, 2003).

addition, he is known for promoting ecumenism, not only theoretically, but also as an active member of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. In Poland, he has received significant publicity following his writings on apokatastasis: *Nadzieja zbawienia dla wszystkich* ('The hope of salvation for all', 1989), *Dramat nadziei zbawienia* (The tragedy of the hope of salvation', 1996), *Chrześcijaństwo nadziei* ('Christianity of hope', 2002), *Nadzieja uczy inaczej* ('Hope teaches otherwise', 2003), *Dlaczego głoszę nadzieję* ('Why I proclaim hope', 2004), *Bóg wszystkim we wszystkich. Ku eschatologii bez dualizmu* ('God of all in all. Towards an eschatology without dualism', 2005).

Most process theologians, including John B. Cobb, stress that every generation of Christians faces the task to constantly update their theology because of the changing culture in which they live. Various systems of knowledge are neither true nor false; rather, they may be more or less useful at any given time. Therefore, theological theses cannot be separated from the discourse governing the given context of time and space.⁴ Whoever speaks of God does so either in reference to an existing philosophy or in terms of his or her own system. There is nothing like a philosophically neutral proclamation of the Gospel. Thus the fundamental task facing every generation of theologians is that of choosing a way of thinking that would be most appropriate to their time and environment. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that between the essence of the proclaimed gospel and the accepted philosophical system no clear line can be drawn. Both these areas are combined into one organism, so to speak, as two poles of a single whole. Their identity is determined within their mutual relationship and is perceived intuitively—that is why the Church undergoes perpetual changes and in this sense may be viewed as a pilgrim.

Above all, it is the plurality of realities (manifested in religion by the multiplicity of confessions, theological currents, piety types, etc.) that determines the dialogical and developmental character of theology. In this context Waław Hryniewicz states that:

the hermeneutical awareness deepened by interconfessional dialogue helps one understand a certain relativity, contextuality, and temporariness of Church doctrines. The dogma is not the end but the beginning which sets boundaries, points in a certain direction and opens the door of understanding. Consequently, no issue must be regarded as ultimately settled by immutable verbal

⁴ J.B. Cobb, Jr, *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 254-266.

pronouncements. Dogma requires understanding, which always entails approximation and temporariness. This also refers to ecumenical agreements reached by dialogue ... Dialogues help us find a greater space of freedom in interpreting the truths of faith. They expand the horizon of understanding, enhance theological sensitivity and somehow lead one beyond confessional boundaries. This is the hermeneutic benefit of dialogue. At the same time, this is a warning to Churches against the danger of doctrinalism and closure.⁵

The processual ideas of Hryniewicz, however, are not confined to doctrinal issues but also impinge on ontology, including anthropology. Convinced that science and religion are complementary sources of discovering the truth about the reality, he expects that:

the sciences focused on life will one day help people understand the phenomenon of man's religiousness. In particular, research on human brain and genes will bring special insights. In all certainty, it will not be a static vision of human nature but one in the continuous process of development. As a result, Christian theology and spirituality will unlock new cognitive horizons. Natural sciences do not have to threaten the future of faith. It would be naïve to think that they will ever be capable of explaining all mysteries of the world. Natural scientists themselves more and more often emphasize the sense of humility needed to face the reality which never ceases to surprise us. A number of things make us realize that the static understanding of nature, both of man and of the world, in the spirit of Plato (i.e. in terms of immutable ideas reflected in reality) must be abandoned. A clear turn toward the philosophical sensitivity of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, stressing change and development, is to be seen.⁶

Man should rationalise the category of God, even though it will always evade his attempts. In this sense God will remain paradoxically close to man and yet ephemeral. So it is with the Church and Christianity; never in history have they been captured in a version that could claim to be perfect and true regardless of time.

Such a view of the Church is rooted in the Old Testament tradition: the prophets always called for reform and challenged the religious *status quo* endorsed by legalistically-minded priests. Hryniewicz, much like

⁵ W. Hryniewicz, *Hermeneutyka w dialogu. Szkice teologiczno-ekumeniczne*, vol. 2, (Opole: Wydaw. Świętego Krzyża, 1998), p. 25. All the quotations of Hryniewicz's works are translated by P. Blumczynski.

⁶ W. Hryniewicz, *Kościół jest jeden. Ekumeniczne nadzieje nowego stulecia*, (Kraków: Znak, 2004), p. 36.

Cobb, presents a two-fold approach to faith: on the one hand he stresses the socio-historical relativity of religion but on the other hand he maintains that the object of faith is never relative.⁷ Concurrently, processual characteristics are not only attributed to the reality created by God but also to God Himself. This follows, above all, from His love conceived of as affective involvement. In the traditional approach, God's love is essentially equivalent to His active goodwill but this understanding, according to John B. Cobb and David R. Griffin, reduces God's love to mere mercy, consisting of doing good as defined by the agent.⁸ Love, however, is spontaneous and responds to the real desires and needs articulated and expressed by the person loved. God not only grants us his unconditional goodness but also remains involved in every moment of our lives. He did not love us once in the past when He decided to lavish His grace upon us. His love is ever fresh and new, responsive, relevant, passionate, involved and full of risk. God does not have a plan of love nor the certainty that His love will yield specific results. On the contrary, He loves us because that is who He is and not because He wants to achieve something! This means that God needs relationships. His essence assumes the relationship of love and therefore He is not a passionless hermit nor a narcissus self-sufficient in his internal structure. Waclaw Hryniewicz also emphasises the relational nature of God who is:

the contradiction of separation and death. He is the most community-minded being. This God may be known in a personal relationship, in a covenant of the mind and heart. The ancient Church in its wisdom is handing down to us through the belief in the holy Trinity of Persons a magnificent intuition that God is a communal and relational reality. He is not an eternal Solitary focused on Himself in the narcissist fancy but a community of Persons, sheer involvement, the archetype of all being. No reality may be comprehended on its own, without reference to others. Even God exists because of communion. Nothing can exist apart from communion, not even God Himself who seeks the friendship of man.⁹

Elsewhere, Hryniewicz adds that God is ontically bound with the world, which means that:

⁷ J.B. Cobb, Jr, *Living Options in Protestant Theology: A Survey of Methods* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 286.

⁸ J.B. Cobb, Jr, and D.R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 46.

⁹ Hryniewicz, *Kościół jest jeden*, p. 91.

the tragedy of creatures is thus incorporated into the mystery of God Himself. Whatever happens in time, finds its ultimate satisfaction in God. Through the drama of salvation history something 'happens' to God as well. In His internal life some kind of 'change' occurs ... God does not jealously guard His happiness, joy and glory for His own sake. He is far from any sort of solipsism. He shares His life and joy with His creatures. The destiny of all creation does not exclude the Creator himself.¹⁰

Process theology has challenged the traditional theistic tenet of God's omnipotence, often presented in terms of His exclusive responsibility for whatever happens in history. God is no longer seen as the Lord in control of everything.¹¹ In other words, the world becomes the fellow creator of the future which can no longer be determined. God stands before the world with his suggestions, as it were, which He recommends and argues for, but without any ultimate obligation. Hryniewicz also states that 'to His creatures, God remains an inexhaustible invitation. He is closer to them than they are to themselves. The compelling beauty of God is not only the perception of His proximity by people but also the way in which he influences created beings.'¹² Any dictatorship or despotic reign is foreign to God's character. He invites and expects one's response. The reality as it unfolds is not the result of God's immutable will, executed arbitrarily, without any dialogue or consent. As Hryniewicz says, 'God is not a Lord who commands but one who serves. In His divine way, He encourages, draws, invites and summons to a response. The response is man's faith out of his free will.'¹³

God's presence in the world means that the reality He created will never pass away. He guarantees its perpetuation. He initiates everything and sustains it by the power of His word. He is the giver of life and that is why He is called the *Eros Universum*.¹⁴ The question of the peace 'here and now', of harmony and fullness in life is coming to the foreground of the eschatology of process theology. In this way a believer is already partaking in the reality of heaven. Peace and harmony are signs of God's presence. They also characterise the Church, seen as the eschatological community of peace.¹⁵ It should be emphasised that in both Cobb's and Hryniewicz's

¹⁰ W. Hryniewicz, *Dramat nadziei zbawienia: Medytacje eschatologiczne* (Warszawa: Verbinum, 1996), pp. 48-49.

¹¹ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, p. 52.

¹² Hryniewicz, *Dramat nadziei zbawienia*, p. 62.

¹³ Hryniewicz, *Kościół jest jeden*, p. 94.

¹⁴ A.N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: New American, 1935), p. 13.

¹⁵ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, p. 128.

thought, the desired harmony is not to be confined to the intra-Christian reality only but to the whole of humankind while:

the Church has been entrusted with the word of reconciliation and peace coming from Christ. The community of His disciples may be a sign of fraternity, benevolence and friendship towards all people. The spirit of brotherhood and solidarity make way for a dialogue with other religions as well. Without dialogue, one cannot be a Christian today. The plurality of religions has become a tremendous challenge to Christianity.¹⁶

Elsewhere, Hryniewicz concludes that:

there are many ways of salvation known only to God. Let us not argue about the fullness of the truth and means of salvation. God has more of them than we can imagine. He is God of all, a truly ecumenical God. St. Clement of Alexandria, at the turn of the second and third centuries, said the following insightful words: 'The Savior is polyphonic (πολύφωνός) and acts in various ways (πολύτροπος) in order to save people'. This wonderful metaphor derived from music is indeed very profound. Let's consider its true depth: the Savior is polyphonic and 'polytropic' for the salvation of people—all people, not just Christians.¹⁷

Consequently, it seems that Hryniewicz is following the same path as Cobb, balancing between religious absolutism and relativism. It is about a constant transformation of the universalistic statements of the respective religions as a result of a conscious dialogue between them. Christianity is a true religion inasmuch as it releases people to a constant quest for the truth.¹⁸ The truth is found 'in between', therefore knowing the truth is not an event but a constant, dialectic process of deconstruction and reconstruction.¹⁹ This refers not only to the relationships between religions but also to Christianity itself, characterised after all by considerable internal diversification. Waclaw Hryniewicz notes that also in the New Testament the fundamental truths were expressed:

by various although complementary notions. This demonstrates the multiplicity of perspectives. There is nothing like the only perspective ... The complementariness of numerous ideas teaches

¹⁶ Hryniewicz, *Kościół jest jeden*, p. 263.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 195-196.

¹⁸ J.B. Cobb, Jr, *Hans Küng's Contribution to Interreligious Dialogue*, in P.F. Knitter (ed.), *Transforming Christianity and the World: A Way Beyond Absolutism and Relativism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), p. 175.

¹⁹ See J.B. Cobb, Jr, 'Responses to Relativism: Common Ground, Deconstruction, and Reconstruction', in *Soundings* 73 (Winter 1990), pp. 595-616.

us how to be open in thinking from a different perspective, the perspective of somebody else. It is only by mutually complementary perspectives and ways of thinking that we come closer to the correct interpretation and fuller understanding of who Jesus Christ is for a Christian. One perspective complements another, corrects it and broadens for the reception of the mystery exceeding all our human notions and experiences.²⁰

From the inter-religious perspective the particular truths are, on the one hand, relative, but on the other, absolutely necessary as parts of the whole. Therefore, every point of view must be taken into consideration and treated with respect. Consequently, it is important that there should be an inclusive inter-religious community which—preserving the dynamic (i.e. constantly transformed) diversity of its members—will stimulate its mutual inspiration and growth. This may result for example in the Buddhisation of Christianity or Christianisation of Buddhism, just as in the period following *Vaticanum Secundum* there was much discussion about the Catholicisation of Protestantism and Protestantisation of Catholicism. In this process, Cobb differentiates between transformation and deformation; the dialogue between the various confessions and religions should neither lead to their homogenisation and loss of specificity nor to a hostile confrontation (and, consequently, a religious war).²¹

Dialogue always leads to the transformation of its participants. Christians, entering into a dialogue with Muslims, Buddhists or representatives of any other religion, do not remain unchanged. According to process theologians, Jesus called his disciples to a dialogical existence; opening oneself to another person is the essence of the Christian mission and, conversely, separationism and missionarism striving to impose one's views on others are foreign to the Spirit of God. Therefore, only in the open dialogue can Christians fulfil the idea of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). This means that the disciples of Christ are always on a spiritual quest; their philosophical and theological ideas are constantly changing. According to Hryniewicz, however, the existence of such unifying but at the same time creative tension:

requires a change of perspective and a willingness to limit oneself and give up claims that others find unacceptable. Someone who thinks he or she is always right will treat others according to the demands of their own imaginations and convictions. There is a

²⁰ Hryniewicz, *Hermeneutika w dialogu*, pp. 21-22.

²¹ J.B. Cobb, Jr, 'The Religions: Where We Are?', in Peter Hodgson and Peter King (eds.), *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Tradition and Tasks* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982, pp. 353-376.

need for a major ecumenical turn which in biblical terms may be referred to as a change in thinking (*metanoia*), inseparable from the ability to resign from oneself (*kénosis*). Unfortunately, we are still remote from the wisdom of this sort of kenotic ecclesiology. It still needs to be fostered by specific stimuli, brave initiatives and new forms of reconciliation; then it should become an everyday experience.²²

In this perspective conversion is also conceived of as a constant transformation brought about by ecumenical dialogue. Other religions are not viewed as demonic manifestations, as was often the case in Church history, but as spheres of the activity of the Holy Spirit.²³

Process theology stresses that God is present in every existence—not as one who determines reality but as the source of all possible growth. Without him, there would be no freedom. It is Him who by confronting His creatures with various solutions, makes choice possible.²⁴ In this way, creation is also participating in the constant creative act; therefore, it is not an instance of one-sidedness (predestination or chaos) but rather the desired harmony between the Creator and creation. This means that in the dimension of human reality both God and man create culture together. Just as nature is to a certain extent produced by people, so culture is partially shaped by God—not only through the contribution of Jesus but through the constant influence of God. The boundary between nature and culture, typical for the modernist thought, is getting blurred. Pursuant to Cobb's insistence on the unity of form and matter, culture influences the very content of faith, not only the manner of its expression.²⁵ This panentheistic model extended to the whole of reality also accounts for the problem of God's suffering. There is no division between the holy and the created; God accompanies man even in exile in order to be saved with him afterwards (rise from the dead to a new life). As Waclaw Hryniewicz argues:

God is somehow affected by the tragedy of man. He partakes in the history of the world as the great Fellow Sufferer who understands. Contemporary philosophers and theologians do not see anything offensive in viewing God as capable of suffering along with us. We return to the old idea of theopaschism. A God who is not capable of

²² Hryniewicz, *Hermeneutika w dialogu*, p. 37.

²³ See Michael E. Lodahl, *Shekhinah/Spirit: Divine Presence in Jewish and Christian Religion* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992); see also Norman Pittinger, *The Christian Church as a Social Process* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), p. 131.

²⁴ Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, p. 29.

²⁵ J.B. Cobb, Jr., 'Faith and Culture', in James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb (eds.), *The New Hermeneutic*, vol. II (New York-Evanston-London: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 225.

suffering cannot be close to suffering creatures either and, consequently, cannot truly love them.²⁶

In conclusion, it must be stressed that the theologies outlined above display a number of points of convergence. This refers, above all, to the issues of religious pluralism, the complementariness of science and religion, the relational character of God, the participation of man in the creation of reality (which entails a certain limitedness of God) and the organic relationship between the Creator and creation. Obviously, apart from numerous similarities, the views of Cobb and Hryniewicz differ considerably at certain points, for example regarding the future (the Kingdom of God on earth, God's eternal memory, universal salvation of the creation in heaven), but they still remain noticeably convergent on the philosophical level. Even though Wacław Hryniewicz cannot be justifiably regarded as a process theologian, his reflection doubtlessly goes beyond the confines of classical theism, also in the direction once set by Alfred North Whitehead and his process theology.

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²⁶ Hryniewicz, *Dramat nadziei zbawienia*, p. 49.

On Being Called-out Strangers in the Land: Some Reflections on Contemporary Lithuanian Baptist Spirituality¹

I come from one of the tiniest Baptist Unions within the Baptist World Alliance. The Baptist Union of Lithuania consists of eight churches and some 400 members. Many of them are Lithuanian-speaking, some are Russian-speaking and, close to the Northern border, we have a church that mostly consists of those of Latvian background.

Being a small Union, it hardly makes it a more homogenous body compared to the larger unions. The smaller the association or the church, the greater seems the ambition to emphasise the distinctives.² This is much evident when it comes to Sunday worship services as they—whether consciously or as the matter of accepted pattern of things—reflect the heart of congregational identity.³ ‘The way we do things’ represents our underlying convictions which govern our individual as well as community life,⁴ thus necessitating the demonstration of those convictions in specific patterns of worship.

Another interesting point to note is that the churches of the same ethno/linguistic making still can be very different, even when they represent a minority group. To provide an example, a Russian-speaking congregation on the coast would have appropriated a rather different music

¹ This paper was first presented in the BWA Worship and Spirituality Commission meeting during the BWA Annual Gathering in Mexico City, Mexico, July 2006. It is published here with some adaptations.

² The best demonstration of that is the fact that the Baptist Union of Lithuania does not contain all congregations in Lithuania that call themselves Baptist or identify themselves with a Baptist movement. After the fall of the Soviet regime, as a result of the activity of missionaries from abroad, mostly from the USA, a number of Baptist churches has been established. Whereas one of those churches has joined the Baptist Union, most others keep little relationship with this body. The numbers are difficult to provide, as most of those independent Baptist churches are critical of ‘Unions’ (and thus instead have formed an informal alliance of independent Baptist congregations), but it should be safe to expect them to be up to 600.

³ See an insightful reflection of the nature and purpose of worship by David F. Ford and Daniel W. Hardy, *Living in Praise: Worshipping and Knowing God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), esp. pp. 68 ff. They helpfully point out how much of the developments of the doctrines have their roots in worship, and how the later separation of the two has wrought many an illness on the body of Christ.

⁴ ‘Convictions’ here are employed to mean those deep-seated beliefs that serve as the grounding force for human motivations, as suggested and defined by James Wm. McClendon, Jr., and James M. Smith, *Understanding Religious Convictions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975) (Rev. Ed. published as *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994)), chap. 4. See Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), chap. 3, and Parush R. Parushev’s elaboration on McClendon and Smith’s and Stassen and Gushee’s work in ‘East and West: A Theological Conversation’, *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2000, pp. 31-44.

style and vocabulary of worship compared to a Russian-speaking church on the other side of the country. Ethnicity, clearly, is but a parcel of the identity that makes each church a distinct (sub)culture of its own.

I have gradually learned to enjoy our diversity, especially since we started to regularly meet for the sessions of NEBIM, our Union's Non-residential Bible School. This is where I have acquired a deeper grasp of the diversity that exists among us, hearing some of the stories and seeing students grappling with some of the shaping factors accounting for what their respective churches have grown to be. One of the issues that has kept re-emerging in our lectures and discussions is that of defining ourselves in relation to, or over against, those next to us—those with whom we share many aspects of life but not our practice of the church: our context; the society in which we live and breathe; the social order we partake of. Thus, in the following pages, I would like to take a look at some of the key aspects of Lithuanian Baptist spirituality as it relates to the calling to be the people of God. I will take for a companion a biblical text and will also employ one of the central elements of the practice of worship: that of singing.⁵ My hope is that using the Lithuanian Baptist story as a case study might help trigger reflection on the contexts of the readers.

Admittedly, there would be some additional dynamics involved for the Russian- and Latvian- speaking Baptists,⁶ yet our context in Lithuania can still largely be defined by the social, political and identity role that the Catholic Church has played for the nation, even though it begins to change, quite rapidly, into something resembling post-Christian societies of the West. Nevertheless, for many years, our main struggle of identity has been that of our not-being-Catholic—and therefore not being properly Lithuanian. The accusation has been helped in certain ways by our reinforcing of that non-belonging. For instance, only a couple of the songs in our hymnal are actually of Lithuanian origin; all others have been translated, mostly from English, German, or Russian, alongside the respective music of the original version.⁷ This is striking on two accounts.

⁵ Some of these reflections follow an article in which I began to explore the role of the first-order theology of songs within the European Baptist framework. 'As Songs Turn into Life and Life into Songs: On the First-Order Theology of Baptist Hymnody', published in Keith G. Jones and Parush R. Parushev, eds. *Currents in Baptist Theology of Worship Today* (Prague: IBTS, 2007), pp. 129-141.

⁶ I will concentrate here on the Baptist communities of Lithuanian ethnicity, yet would like to keep other congregations in view for two reasons. First, their spirituality cannot be understood apart from the story of Lithuania and the spirituality of Lithuanian churches. Secondly, at least in my interpretation, these churches currently experience a transitory stage and, with certain distinctives retained, should increasingly integrate themselves into the Lithuanian setting.

⁷ *Giesmių vainikas* (Kaunas: Naujasis Iankas, 1998). I am one of the editors of the hymnal and so my critique goes as much in my direction as that of any other Lithuanian Baptists.

First, even given the smallness of our Baptist community, one would still expect some expressions of (God-engrained) creativity that would have produced some local Christian songs. Yet such songs are few and not much used. Secondly, apart from the creativity of music, there is that of words which could be adapted to some existing tunes (or read as poems until someone comes up with a fitting tune). Yet that is also rare. Fanny Crosby or modern praise and worship enjoy much more popularity. This is a good illustration of our ‘strangeness’ as perceived by other Lithuanian people, even as they become more tolerant of non-Catholics.

With this kind of background in mind, I would like to stop at one of the texts that I remember from my earliest years growing up in the Baptist community: that of the First Epistle of Peter. Whether it was indeed read more often than other texts during those challenging times of Soviet rule I cannot say, but I do think it has been one of the formative texts for our Baptist community. It was addressing our double not-belonging—not part of the general Soviet society and some of its practices; and not part of the Lithuanian (Catholic) tradition.

1 Peter both helps to shed light on my own Baptist community’s spirituality in terms of encountering the world, and at the same time, I will argue, points to the corrective. The background theme of 1 Peter, that of baptism, is also of help for us here.⁸ For one thing, it relates to the baptistic conviction of baptism as an initiation into the body of Christ.⁹ As an initiation, it also epitomises the life of the disciple—and the life of the disciples in community—in its entirety.¹⁰ Being immersed in the baptismal waters is being immersed into the demands of the life of following the one who was immersed into death and overcame it (1 Pt 3:18-22).¹¹

Given the richness of the epistle, the following deliberations will be limited to two key notions found in the text: ‘strangers’ and ‘suffering’. The letter is written ‘to God’s elect, strangers in the world’ (1:1).¹² It is in the context of the strangeness of the people of God that their current experience (i.e., that of suffering) is being explained. This is why this letter

⁸ Some suggest that it comprises of a baptismal liturgy and/or a sermon. Other scholars would be more reserved, but in any case, the presence of the material relating to the issue of baptism is obvious. For an overview of the discussion of the nature of the epistle, see, for example, John Elliott’s ‘Peter, First Epistle of’, in *Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume V* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 269-278.

⁹ I see this as an essential piece of (truly) baptist ecclesiology. For a helpful overview of the theology of baptism as it relates to worship, see Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM, 2004), chap. 10.

¹⁰ Ellis, p. 219.

¹¹ See Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, Vol. 13 (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), p. 114.

¹² NIV. All other quotations, unless specified otherwise, come from the NRSV.

could speak worlds during the times of occupation and suppression of the practice of faith for my own Baptist community. Suffering in 1 Peter is sometimes equated with persecution from the side of the state, but it seems to have been much broader than that.¹³ What was the reality of the recipients of the letter was the experience of hostility from the side of the neighbours, unbeliever husbands, masters of the Christian slaves, and so on.¹⁴ ‘Their environment “is alienated” (4:4) from the new behaviour of its former fellow citizens and hence excludes and defames the Christian community, even makes them into enemies and denounces them (2:12,23; 3:14-17; 4:4,14-16).’¹⁵ Such is the price for following Jesus the Christ, partaking in the ‘great salvation’, and joining a new ‘nation’. For Peter, this reflects the heart of their Christian identity: being strangers in the land which is not home; living as foreigners or resident aliens. As one of our hymns puts it, with a pietistic ring:

Tired heart, remember, you have a secure home,
Where fear and worries will disappear and there will be no changes
anymore.
Just wait, wait patiently and do not be sad,
Just wait and suffer another little hour!
Survive, o heart, believe, o heart, watch and pray!¹⁶

Thus, Peter continues, this nation of chosen strangers should not be surprised by the suffering and persecution which befalls them:

Christians can even rejoice in them since they are the reverse side of belonging to God. The condition of social exclusion and persecution can be thus understood and embraced. Hence deliberately accepting estrangement and its consequences will integrate social non-identity into Christian identity, so that *the hitherto worrying and faith-threatening experiences* (cf. 1:6; 4:12) *now turn into a moment for assurance of faith.*¹⁷

¹³ Materials on this abound; see e.g. I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), p. 14; see also John H. Elliott, ‘The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Step-Child: 1 Peter in Recent Research’, Charles H. Talbert, ed., *Perspectives on First Peter*, NABPR Special Studies Series, Number 9 (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986), pp. 13-14.

¹⁴ Marshall, *1 Peter*, p. 14. Marshall observes the fact that the slaves are addressed, rather than the masters, and that addressing wives is substantially longer than addressing husbands, which for him communicates something of the make-up of the letter’s readers.

¹⁵ Reinhard Feldmeier, ‘The “Nation” of Strangers: Social Contempt and its Theological Interpretation in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity’. Trans. David E. Orton and Alan Mos, in Mark G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), p. 252.

¹⁶ ‘Pavargusi širdie’ (original text W.H. Bellamy), in *Giesmių vainikas*, No. 194.

¹⁷ Feldmeier, ‘The “Nation” of Strangers’, p. 258.

Or, in the words of another song we sing:

You will have many troubles in the world
And often will be humiliated;
Sometimes the neighbour will make you suffer
And friends will hurt you,
But if you will press yourself to Jesus
And will tell him of all of your troubles,
You will then feel a wonderful peace –
Only remain watchful and brave.¹⁸

So far, so good. Or, perhaps, this is too strong a statement: ‘suffering’ and ‘good’ do not easily go together. However, it would be difficult to straightforwardly object to any of the above, even if we might not like the message in terms of its application to ourselves. I should perhaps also mention that songs such as those quoted above are not sung too often nowadays in my community. It might have something to do with the unpleasantness of the message in relation to the current shape of our lives in which we are much encouraged to avoid suffering, or, alternatively, to choose the kind of suffering we prefer. Both of the quoted songs are old; the new ones that have been translated and added to the hymnal tend to reflect the standard themes dominant in today’s songs in the English-speaking world: individual’s response to God’s love, forgiveness and grace; ‘inward’ and ‘other-worldly’ spirituality, all in victorious even if humbly-presented overtones.¹⁹ Thus part of the challenge of remaining faithful to the message of 1 Peter today is holding to the reality and normativeness of suffering, singing these old songs as well as supplementing them with new ones, expanding our identification of suffering and putting it into more concrete pictures, thereby continuing to struggle with that difficult companion of the Christian life. Pain and distress need space to be spoken of and acknowledged so that, in the way of the Psalms, they eventually can turn into wonder and jubilation.

I am reminded here of my recent conversation with some members of the Northumbria Community on one of their visits to IBTS, who shared with me that one of the greatest compliments the Community received was that it ‘did misery really well’.²⁰ Lithuanian cultural heritage is rooted in melancholic, monotonous tunes and restrained harmony, which also should

¹⁸ ‘Eik drąsiai keliu jau pradėtu’, in *Giesmių vainikas*, No. 198. ‘You’ is singular, which would reflect the majority of the songs.

¹⁹ I explore some of these tendencies in greater detail in ‘As Songs Turn into Life and Life into Songs’.

²⁰ Private conversation with Jeff Sutheran, a leading member of the community, Prague, 22 May 2006. For more on the Community see their website, <http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/>.

make us naturally ‘do misery well’. That quality, however, is virtually nonexistent in our translated Baptist songs; even where words speak of pain and affliction, they are accompanied by cheery or methodical Anglo-American or German tunes.²¹ Both consciously and subconsciously, we have been reinforcing our ‘negative identity’—being ‘not-Catholic’, where, of course, use of folk motifs happens quite freely. Thus the challenge of the continuous struggle with the reality of suffering extends to songs in their entirety; not only words but music; not only music as it is written but also the way it is actually sung.²²

Thus, a conclusion would seem to be at hand: we need to be prepared to deal with that difficult recognition of the reality and indeed necessity of suffering. It is difficult, but doable, as is demonstrated by many an instance in Christian history when the calling to be the nation of strangers has been embodied, even at the price of becoming the calling away from the mission for the people in the midst of where they live, with the chosen strangers focusing on their non-belonging and on suffering *per se*. Yet this is where 1 Peter is not listened to carefully enough: for what this calling to become a people of strangers means is that it liberates them from conforming to the stagnating, shackling patterns (‘desires’ - 1:14; or ‘futile ways of the ancestors’ - 1:18) of the world *so* that they might engage that very world, ‘the Gentiles’. It is in that engagement that suffering becomes transformative and redemptive, coloured in the light of what is yet to come. The followers of Christ embody the future that the world has with God; they become part of the new age which started with the bursting of the tomb on that Resurrection day.²³ It is for that, rather than any other reason that Peter can say, ‘Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called – that you might inherit a blessing’ (3:9).

²¹ Russian hymnody presents an interesting case. Traditionally, the majority of songs, both in the larger Russian culture as well in the church, have been set in the minor key, naturally communicating the element of soberness and struggle. My observations of the dynamics of the Russian-background churches within the Lithuanian Baptist Union are that the minor key is becoming less and less popular. It might be connected to the weakening connection with the (Slavic) folk tradition that can be observed in the larger culture. This, of course, is a natural process we are undergoing under the dynamics of globalisation and renegotiation of cultural identities. However, what emerges does strike as severely reductive in terms of reflecting the whole spectrum of Christian experience.

²² I am thinking here particularly of inflections, characteristic of Lithuanian folk songs. One of the members in my home church would naturally inflect any songs, and, as he happened to have a rather loud voice, subvert the whole group so that a fine American-style praise-and-worship song would somehow start resembling a Lithuanian folk piece. I might mention that this was not much appreciated by the congregation.

²³ Eduard Lohse, ‘Parenthesis and Kerygma in 1 Peter’, trans. John Steely, in Talbert, *Perspectives on First Peter*, p. 59.

The mission to their contemporary society – ‘the Gentiles’ – takes very concrete shape such as, for instance, serving as the underlining intention of the so-called ‘household rules’ or ‘code’ of 2:13-3:9.²⁴ It is that clear purpose of being called out and its concrete contextual shapes that I find wanting in our worship. Looking at our songs, mission to the world in most instances seems to be rather vague and mostly related to witnessing by words:

When I will come to eternity,
 When the Lord will invite me to his throne,
 Will I have to meet him with empty hands, without fruit?
How I wish to win at least one soul for the Lord,
So that I could stand in front of Him on that great day
*Not emptyhanded.*²⁵

In the absence of the concrete ways that love can be shown, implicit dualism comes to the surface: the most valuable witness is that of verbally conveying the message of salvation. This might be partly explained by the pietistic influence that certainly has been one of the formative factors for Lithuanian Baptists. It also reflects the legacy of the Communist regime which has taught the believers to expect the state to take the responsibility for, and the care of, the social needs of society, including the members of the church.²⁶ Witnessing, understood as propositional presentation of what is seen to be the summary of the gospel, becomes the sole task of the congregation and its individual members. Quick-fix evangelism resources then become very handy.

Yet we should know better; if not for other reasons, then at least because, frankly, it does not work: quick-fix methods do not seem to be able to make disciples, to the frustration of many missionaries in Lithuania. We know this is not the test of faithfulness as enough of us have a memory of life where, with words of evangelism restricted, much more could be

²⁴ For a helpful overview of the role of domestic duties in relationship to the letter as a whole see John H. Elliott, ‘1 Peter, its Situation and Strategy: A Discussion with David Balch’, in *Perspectives on First Peter*, pp. 61-78. Elliott is in a conversation and debate with another scholar interested in the issues of distinctiveness and acculturation, David L. Balch, who takes the view that the household codes serve to encourage the recipient communities to conform to the lifestyle of the surrounding (hellenistic) environment (rather than the primacy of the Jewish tradition) and thus call for a greater assimilation with culture. Elliott’s article is a part of this conversation. Balch’s contribution appears in the same volume (pp. 79-101).

²⁵ ‘Amžinybėn kai nueisiu’ (original text Charles C. Luther), in *Giesmių vainikas*, No. 231.

²⁶ For a more detailed account of the theology of social involvement of the post-soviet evangelicals see Lina Andronovienė and Parush R. Parushev, ‘Church, State, and Culture: On the Complexities of Post-Soviet Evangelical Social Involvement’, in *Theological Reflections: Euro-Asian Theological Journal* 3 (2004), pp. 174-227.

said by one's behaviour. One of the songs under the section 'The work in God's Kingdom' in our hymnal offers some buds of hope in this respect, very much echoing the spirit of 1 Peter:

In this world, in quarrels and noise,
 You invite us to sow peace.
 People will calm down when they will accept you
 And will begin to believe your words.
 God, we ask you to bless us
 And to fill us with peace.
 As you embrace us with your fatherly arms,
 Set us on fire by the Spirit.²⁷

Here I see the second part of the challenge that the message of 1 Peter poses; a challenge that is even more difficult than the acceptance of suffering. If the worship of the worship services is both a shaping force and a reflection of the whole of life, then we can see the implications of taking the message of 1 Peter seriously in terms of our songs which both mould and echo our spirituality. If suffering is a part and parcel of being the chosen, estranged people, then God's people should be ready for it. Yet that suffering has to have a purpose beyond itself, so that God's people will be able to see how that suffering becomes worship, both as a response of the evildoers when they 'see [the Christians'] honourable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge' (2:12), as well as the sufferers' sanctifying Christ as Lord in their hearts as they undergo distress and affliction (3:15).

A lot has changed in Lithuania since it gained its freedom some fifteen years ago. The society is different; the churches have also become different—at times enthusiastically, at times reluctantly, at times unconsciously. The nature of suffering has largely changed and now, more often, involves the existential anguish of making sense of one's own rather isolated life in changed circumstances. Yet the struggle is still there: how are we to be good witnesses in our own land? Or, to use the way the Northumbria community poses the question, 'How do we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?'²⁸

Our hymnal has recently grown as an appendix has been added. The selection of the songs will reflect more of the Lithuanian heritage as well as the gifts of brothers and sisters from around the world, from countries we are little familiar with. I am delighted that some buds of targetting the

²⁷ 'Dieve, prašom, Tu palaimink mus' (original text P. Strauch), in *Giesmių vainikas*, No. 235.

²⁸ This is one of the key concerns of the Northumbria Community. See their website, <http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/>.

concrete ways of being the called-out people of God are present, such as in the song below which has been kindly given to us by the Iona Community:

If I call you by name, will you help the blind to see?
Will you help me to set a prisoner free?
Will your heart dare even to kiss a lepper for healing,
Even when no-one will see?

Will you accept yourself as you are, if I call you by name?
Will you see how precious and valuable you are to me?
Will you share that which you believe
So that others around you might be touched by my word and my
look?²⁹

Answers to these, and other, questions will have to be found by each community itself, but I would hope that this from 1 Peter can be remembered: it will require a deep sense of being a chosen nation of strangers who live doing good so that God may be glorified. Then worship, being at the heart of any instance of the gathering of God's people, will be about living out the future into which God calls them.

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²⁹ Translation into Lithuanian by Nijole Latuziene. Original version 'Will you come and follow me', Words by Iona Community (John Bell and Graham Maule), can be found in many sources, e.g., *Baptist Praise and Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), No. 363.

Penetration of the Baptists into the Russian Empire in the Nineteenth Century

At the mid-nineteenth century, Russia, covering almost eight million square miles and a population of seventy-three million, was a world empire. Its territory stretched in Europe from Poland and territories on the Baltic Sea, eastward across Asia to the Pacific Ocean, and then on to Alaska in North America. It also extended from the Arctic Sea in the north to the Black Sea and the Caucasus in the south.

At this time the continental European Baptist movement was very young. Johann Gerhard Oncken (1800-1884), the father of Continental Baptists, established his first church in Hamburg, Germany, in 1834. The Oncken movement, in spite of political and religious opposition, soon spread to other parts of Germany as well as neighbouring Denmark (1839), The Netherlands (1845), Austria (1846), Switzerland (1847), and Sweden (1848). The movement was dynamic, believing it moved with an apostolic mandate to preach Christ crucified to everyone, insisting on a personal religious experience, followed by believer's baptism by a missionary, and this became a watchword for the movement.

On his first visit to Russia in 1864 to St. Petersburg, Oncken gained an audience with the head of the Ministry of the Interior, Count Sievers. When Sievers charged Baptists for proselytising, thus prohibiting their recognition, Oncken retorted: '...if the charge brought against us means that our primary object is to put people under water, we repudiate the charge'. He explained that Baptists do not teach that baptism is necessary for salvation but '...hold that simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work saves the soul; and we believe that God has called us to preach this great truth among the millions throughout Europe....'¹

It did not take long before Baptists were lapping at Russia's border. Swedish Baptists were just across the Baltic Sea. East Prussia was a German province that bordered the Kingdom of Poland and Baltic territory, both of which were under Russian sovereignty.

In 1850 two prominent German Baptist leaders, Gottfried W. Lehmann and Julius Köbner, approached the Russian border but, without visas, were stopped. Nevertheless, on Russian territory with other believers

¹ *Quarterly Reporter*, January 1865, p. 76.

they sang a missionary hymn and fervently prayed ‘that day might at length spring up in these dark regions’.²

An evangelistic mission effort in the Russian Empire would be formidable. The Empire possessed not only vast territory, diverse populations, limited communication and transportation, and an Eastern culture, but was also an autocracy with xenophobia towards the West and with a state church, the Russian Orthodox Church, jealous of its privileges. Although the state granted religious freedom to traditional populations and to immigrants, such as Germans, it strictly forbade proselytism of the Orthodox population and barred western missionaries.

In the Empire Protestantism was the predominant faith among Finns, Estonians, and Latvians on the Baltic and among the majority of the German population, but, by and large, the Protestant churches—Lutheran, Reformed, and Mennonite—were non-missionary and sought to protect their own special interests. They lived primarily in their own communities with adherents coming generally from their own children. Even the Mennonites who, in theory, practiced believer’s baptism had, generally, lost their Anabaptist zeal; for most of them baptism was performed almost *pro forma* as a community rite.

The Baptist movement arrived at a propitious time. Significant changes were beginning to occur in Russia with the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and their increased mobility. Other Great Reforms followed which brought political, judicial and military change. In addition, railroads were built, and literacy, although still limited and far below standards in the West, was rising.

Some stirring was also occurring on the religious front. The British and Foreign Bible Society, through its translation work and distribution of scripture, and the Religious Tract Society provided scripture and tracts. Johannes Bonekemper (1795-1857) and his son Karl (1817-1893) made their Reformed parish near Odessa a centre of revivalism, and Eduard Wüst (1818-1859), a separatist Lutheran in South Russia who preached with revival fervour, made an impact on both Lutherans and Mennonites.

On the Border

The Baptist Church in Memel in East Prussia (today Klaipeda in Lithuania), established in 1841 as the tenth German Baptist Church and the first in East Prussia, became the Baptist ‘Antioch’ for much of the Baltic

² *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, November 1850, p. 311.

region.³ In 1853 the *Baptist Missionary Magazine* reported that the church had ten mission stations, one of which was at Tilsit on the Russian border which was extending its influence into Russia itself. A woman of the Tilsit station wrote a letter which resulted in the conversion of a young Russian. Two brothers in Russia also became believers, one of whom was converted from a tract. A further report in 1859 told of a woman who came many miles from behind the Russian border to hear preaching at one of the stations near Tilsit.⁴

Another border territory was the Åland Islands, situated in the Baltic Sea between Sweden and Finland, which were populated by Swedes but belonged to Russia. During the Crimean War when the islands were under British occupation, Carl M. Möllersvärd (1832-1901) – who had been baptized in 1853 in the Baptist Mariner's Church in New York City – after returning to Sweden went to the islands in 1854. A member of the Evangelical Union provided him assistance for trade with the British navy. Although only twenty-one years old, he began to preach, starting a revival movement. After two and a half months of ministry, he was forced to depart due to the Russian reoccupation, but seeds had been planted for Baptist work.⁵

Because of Möllersvärd's influence and Swedish Baptist publications on believer's baptism, three men from the Åland Islands went in 1856 to Stockholm for baptism. On their return to the islands, one of the four baptized four more converts. In the same year at Föglö, believers formed the first Baptist Church in the Russian Empire. The work in the Ålands led to the first baptism in 1869 in Finland, then also part of Russia.⁶

Poland and Volhynia

The year 1853 was not only noteworthy for Baptist work at Tilsit and for Möllersvärd's baptism but was also the year of the conversion of Gottfried Alf (1831-1898), the founder of the Baptist work in the Kingdom of

³ For references to the Memel church as an 'Antioch', see *Der Sendbote*, 13 January 1892, p. 2, and A.H. Newman, *A Century of Baptist Achievement* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1901), p. 128.

⁴ *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, July 1853, p. 307. *Missionsblatt*, August 1859, p. 130.

⁵ *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, September 1855, pp. 403-404. *Evangelical Christendom*, April 1855, p. 118. Alvar Sundell, *De Började—Vi Försätter: Baptismen I Finland 100 År, 1856-1956* (Vasa: Facklans Förlag, 1956), pp. 7-12.

⁶ Sundell, *De Började*, pp. 13-14. *Baptist Work in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden* (Stockholm: Baptistmissionens Bokförlag, 1947), pp. 28-32.

Poland, known also as Congress Poland.⁷ Alf was twenty-two, a Lutheran of German extraction, and a school teacher, who in the absence of the parish pastor led the worship services. Without outside influence but through scripture and prayer, he came to trust fully by faith in Christ's redemption. He began to preach, but the Lutheran authorities forbade his continued activity, which led to the loss of his teaching position and being banishment from his home, forcing him to leave with his wife and a baby son. Fortunately his father gave him land to make a living.

He began to undertake mission trips and on one of them was seized and imprisoned for three days. Because of persecution from the Lutheran Church, he felt he must leave it, but where would he go? A settler from East Prussia told Alf about the Baptists in East Prussia, a denomination of which Alf knew nothing. After initial resistance, Alf was finally convinced of believer's baptism and decided to become a Baptist. As a result, his father now took away the land he had given him, thus losing his livelihood a second time. He now moved to Adamowo, a small village north east of Warsaw. In November 1858, Wilhelm Weist from East Prussia crossed the border into Russia and baptized Alf and twenty-five others, and before his departure conducted several more baptisms. The believers in Adamowo were constituted as a station of the Stolzenberg Baptist Church in East Prussia but became an independent congregation in 1861, the first Baptist Church in Congress Poland. A second church at Kicin followed three weeks later.

With the hope that he would not return, the authorities in 1859 granted Alf permission to study at Oncken's mission school in Hamburg, Germany. Here he stayed for several months and was ordained, becoming the first ordained Baptist minister in the Russian Empire. Alf continued his work as an itinerant evangelist, holding meetings with Pentecostal fervour. He reached out primarily to the German minority, mostly composed of Lutherans and Mennonites, but also preached in Polish, seeking to win Roman Catholic Poles who composed the greater majority of the population. Between 1860 and 1865 persecution against Alf and other Baptists was intense. Gottfried Liebert, early chronicler of the Baptist movement in Poland, claimed Alf suffered eighteen times from persecution, some life threatening, which included thirty-two imprisonments and transport of 1,728 kilometers.⁸ Alf also faced mob assault.

⁷ For the career of Alf, see Albert W. Wardin, Jr, *Gottfried F. Alf: Pioneer of the Baptist Movement in Poland* (Brentwood, TN: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2003).

⁸ Gottfried Liebert, *Geschichte der Baptisten in Russisch-Polen* (Hamburg: J G Oncken, c. 1874), p. 246.

Beginning in 1859 but flooding into the 1860s many of the early German Baptist converts in Poland travelled 500 miles eastward to Volhynia in Western Ukraine, primarily for greater economic opportunity but also for more settled political conditions and religious freedom. Alf made a number of trips to this region where, in May 1864, he led in establishing two of the earliest Baptist churches in Ukraine—one at Horczik and a second at Soroczyn. Besides trips to Volhynia, he also travelled in 1883 to the Volga.⁹

In 1883 Alf claimed he had baptized 3,685 people and probably more before his death in 1898. Alf was not only a revivalist and organiser of churches but also attracted coworkers. He conducted mission schools and established Sunday schools. In 1887 he became the first president of the Union of the Baptist Churches in Russia, a union of non-Russians, a post he held until his death.

The Alf movement was an indigenous work, although it gained its doctrine and polity from the German Baptists as well as moral and emotional support. It also received funds from America, Germany and Great Britain for mission support and chapels. From Oncken's appeal, the Bristo Place Baptist Church in Edinburgh, Scotland, which still exists, provided money for Alf's support.

In 1897 the Russian census noted about 4,000 Baptists in Congress Poland and 10,400 in Volhynia, most of whom were a result of the Alf movement. In the meantime many of the converts had already migrated to America, including Alf's nephew, Martin Klemm, who was my great-grandfather, joining with other family members the German Baptist Conference (now North American Baptist Conference) in the USA.

Baltic Provinces

The Baptist Church in Memel not only extended its influence in East Prussia but also up the coast of the Baltic Sea in Russia. As a consequence, Baptist work was established in Latvia, Estonia and St. Petersburg.¹⁰ By 1855 nine people, born in Courland (today part of Latvia) but of German descent, were members of the Memel Church. In 1855 the church baptized its first Latvian, Frizis Jekabsons (Jacobson), a young helmsman, who soon

⁹ A church was established at Neu-Danzig in Ukraine on 5 May 1864 (o.s.), two days before the Horczik Church, but it was soon broken up by the authorities.

¹⁰ For material on the mission work of the Memel Church in the Russian Empire, see, *Mission der Gemeinde in Russland*, in Otto Ekermann, *Gnadenwunder: Geschichte der Ersten Ostpreussischen Baptistengemeinde in Memel und ihrer Missionsfelder in Ostpreussen und Russland, 1841-1928* (Memel: Author, 1928), pp. 49-100.

returned to his home in Libau (today Liepaja). With the ending of the Crimean War, German members of the Memel Church settled in Latvian territory, drawn there for economic opportunity. A couple of them learned the Lettish language and began to witness to the native population. In 1859 the pastor of the church in Memel, Ferdinand Niemetz (1814-1873), accompanied by a Lettish interpreter, bravely held meetings in spite of threats and police surveillance.

In 1858 and 1859 the Memel Church baptized limited numbers of individuals from Courland. In 1860 eleven Latvians from Courland crossed the border in a farmer's cart to be baptized; in 1861 two other groups arrived by sea to avoid the border crossing. In 1861 the church commissioned two men to serve in Latvian territory, Daniel Juraschka to minister among Germans and Adam Gertners (Gaertner) (1829-1875) – one of the Latvian converts, age thirty-two – to minister among the Latvians. The latter held his first baptism on Latvian soil in September 1861, baptizing seventy-two candidates.

In spite of severe persecution from 1860 to 1865, the Baptist work grew. Congregations were established as mission stations of the Memel Church. In 1875 the church, with its twenty-seven stations, numbered 2,780 members with the majority living in a foreign land. In 1876 and the years following, the Memel Church granted independence to its Latvian stations. In 1879 the Prussian Association granted permission to Latvian Baptists to form a Baltic Association, which in 1881 had almost 4,000 members.

In October 1855 the Memel Church was able to extend its influence even further up the Baltic coast to St. Petersburg, then the capital of the Russian Empire, with the settlement in the city of one of its members, Ch. Plonus, a tailor.¹¹ Plonus distributed tracts, which he had brought with him, and gathered a group that furthered this activity. After 1857 a circle gathered with Plonus for meetings on Sunday morning and Monday evening.

In 1864 Oncken with Niemetz travelled to St. Petersburg where the former baptized seven candidates between midnight and one in the morning, the first Baptist baptism in the imperial city, which brought the membership there to eleven.¹² The St. Petersburg mission continued, although beset with inner conflict. In 1874 Johann G. Kargel (1849-1937), later noted as an outstanding evangelical theologian, helped to bring

¹¹ *Der Sendbote*, 28 May 1884, p. 170; Ekelmann, *Gnadenwunder*, p. 86, gives the date of 1856 of Plonus's settlement.

¹² See *Quarterly Reporter*, January 1865, pp. 73-79, on Oncken's trip to St. Petersburg.

stability, serving until 1880. In the latter year the St. Petersburg work was constituted as an independent Baptist church. Although it was a German Baptist church, it was multicultural; its membership also included Latvians, Estonians and Swedes.

The St. Petersburg church extended its outreach to neighbouring Estonian territory through the work of its pastor, Adam R. Schiewe (1843-1930). Because of revival from Swedish missionaries, some individuals began to baptize believers by sprinkling. Upon hearing of Baptists in St. Petersburg, they invited Schiewe to visit them. In February 1864 Schiewe baptized twenty-nine candidates. For some years Schiewe undertook mission tours in northern Estonia and offshore islands. Also in 1884 Julius Herrmann (1852-1915), pastor of the German Baptist Church in Riga, travelled to Pärnau in the south and in August baptized, at midnight, seven believers. Estonian Baptists began to form their own congregations and in 1896 an association.¹³

Ukraine – German Believers

With the migration of German Baptists from Poland, a strong German Baptist presence was established in northwest Ukraine in Volhynia. One of the leading missionaries here was Karl Ondra (1839-1887), born in Poland but who settled in Volhynia, where in 1863 he was baptized. After studying at the mission school in Hamburg, he returned to Volhynia where, at the age of twenty-six, he began a ministry not only in Volhynia where he resided but also throughout South Russia until 1877. In that year the authorities exiled him back to Poland, together exiling five others, all charged with mission activity among the Russian population, but charges they denied.

Ukraine was open to further evangelical penetration, not only because of the activity of the Bonekempers, father and son, and Wüst, but also because of the Stundist movement. Stundists gathered in small groups in an hour or *Stunde* for Bible study and prayer. Stundism brought an evangelical quickening among German Lutherans, Reformed and Mennonites and, in turn, also spread among native Ukrainians.

In 1860 the new evangelical currents produced a split in Mennonite ranks with the establishment of the Mennonite Brethren who stressed regeneration with the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper

¹³ For the work of Schiewe and Herrmann, see *Der Wahrheitszeuge*, 15 April 1884, p. 85; 1 May 1884, p. 96; and *Quarterly Reporter*, July, 1885, pp. 9-10.

applicable only for the converted.¹⁴ German Baptists had a significant influence on the development of the early Mennonite Brethren through correspondence and personal emissaries. Baptists provided information and counsel regarding public worship, local church and denominational organisation, and even believer's baptism by immersion.¹⁵

When Johann Classen returned in May 1860 to the Molotschna colony from St. Petersburg, where he defended Mennonite Brethren interests, he brought with him a tract on believer's baptism by immersion, almost certainly from the circle founded by the German Baptist, Ch. Plonus. From reading the tract, Mennonite Brethren changed the mode of baptism from pouring to immersion, with the first immersion in September when Jakob Bekker baptized Henry Bartel and then Bartel baptized Bekker. However, in Poland, Gottfried Alf was critical of some Mennonite Brethren who immersed candidates kneeling and then forward; for him there was only one proper way to immerse—once backward.¹⁶

German Baptists and Mennonite Brethren regarded themselves as spiritual collaborators. The Brethren, however, continued to distinguish themselves by the practice of footwashing and nonresistance, gaining for the latter practice, as other Mennonites, exemption from military service.

With evangelistic zeal, Mennonite Brethren began to immerse Lutherans who accepted spiritual rebirth. At Pentecost in May 1864, in the German colony of Neu-Danzig, Gerhard Wieler (accompanied by Jakob Bekker) immersed a number of candidates, thus forming a Baptist congregation. But this church brought immediate repression. Between 1864-1865, with the cooperation of Lutheran and government authorities, around ten families and some individuals suffered transportation, imprisonment, and then exile to Catalui, an area of German settlement in Dobruja, then under Turkish control. On their own volition, other families

¹⁴ For the beginnings and early development of the Mennonite Brethren Church, see John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1974), pp. 26-77. In an article in *Missionsblatt*, June 1865, p. 93, the German Baptist missions publication, the author pointed out that around 1853 (notice again this fateful year) a revival broke out among rural colonists which eventually led to persecution of Mennonites and Baptists.

¹⁵ See Albert W. Wardin, Jr, 'Baptist Influences on Mennonite Brethren with an Emphasis on the Practice of Immersion', *Direction* 8.4 (October, 1979), pp. 33-38, and Wardin, 'Mennonite Brethren and German Baptists in Russia: Affinities and Dissimilarities', in Paul Toews, ed., *Mennonites and Baptists: A Continuing Conversation* (Winnipeg, MB and Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1993), pp. 97-112.

¹⁶ Peter M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910)*, tr. from the German (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978), pp. 285, 288.

settled there, which became, as K. I. Veltistov, a Russian Orthodox author, stated, a 'lightning conductor for Baptists of Russia'.¹⁷

In the German colony of Alt-Danzig, about one hundred miles to the north, another Mennonite Brethren, J. Kowalsky, baptized twenty-seven in September 1864. The authorities imprisoned Kowalsky and exiled him to Turkey.¹⁸ But the group in Alt-Danzig persisted. At first they knew nothing about Baptists but, with problems among the Mennonite Brethren, turned to the German Baptists for help.

After the announcement in 1868 from the governor of the province that German Baptists were to be tolerated, the field was open at least for work among fellow Germans.¹⁹ In the wake of revival, Abraham Unger (1820-1880) from the Mennonite colony of Chortitsa baptized fifty candidates at Alt-Danzig on 11 June 1869 (o.s.).²⁰

The leading figure to emerge in Alt-Danzig was Johann E. Pritzkau (1842-1924), who was probably immersed in the 1864 baptism in Alt-Danzig. He was born in this colony and went to Hamburg for study with Oncken where he was ordained for mission service. Upon his return in 1869, aged twenty-seven, he began a notable ministry of fifty-five years that extended to both Germans and Ukrainians.²¹

With the encouragement of Pritzkau, Oncken, now almost seventy years of age, made his second trip to Russia, a most arduous journey, which included a wagon and carriages without springs. At one point the police detained him. With his prestige and acumen, he helped to bring stability to both the nascent Mennonite Brethren and German Baptist work. He visited Alt-Danzig, arriving 16 September 1869 (o.s.), shortly after the June baptism. He not only preached but also baptized. Here a German Baptist Church was constituted with Johann Pritzkau as one of the elders. He also visited other sites, including Einlage where he advised the Mennonite Brethren on proper church order, and ordained Abraham Unger, their

¹⁷ *Missionsblatt*, June 1865, pp. 92-94; July 1865, pp. 106-108; Oct. 1865, pp. 156-57. *Quarterly Reporter*, April 1869, p. 360. Johann Wieler, 'Erweckungen und Verfolgungen in Süd-Russland', *Der Sendbote*, 1 April 1874, p. 51. Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii, *Yuzhnorusskii shtundizm* (SPB, 1889), pp. 44-45. K I Veltistov, 'Nemetskii baptizm v Rossii', *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, June 1902, p. 1022.

¹⁸ *Missionsblatt*, Oct., 1865, p. 157. J.E. Pritzkau, *Geschichte der Baptisten in Süd-Russland* (Odessa: Wenske & Lübeck, 1914), pp. 12, 31. Pritzkau recorded twenty baptized in Alt-Danzig.

¹⁹ *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, February 1869, p. 61.

²⁰ *Quarterly Reporter*, July 1870, pp. 836-38.

²¹ For a biography of Pritzkau, see J.J. Pritzkau, Prediger J.E. Pritzkau, der Pionier der deutschen Baptisten Süd-Russland', *Familienfreund*, 15 August 1927, pp. 4-5. References to his life may be found in his work, *Geschichte der Baptisten in Süd-Russland*.

leading pastor at this place and the person who had baptized at Alt-Danzig in June, as well as two preachers and two deacons.²²

Ukraine – Ukrainian Believers

Revival also spread among the Ukrainian population. Numbers of Ukrainians worked on German farms or in households and were influenced by the German *Stunde*.²³ Around 1860, because of the ministry of Johann Bonekemper, a Ukrainian stundist group emerged at Ossnova north of Odessa. Other Ukrainian stundists also appeared in the area of Alt-Danzig, about 150 miles north east. Here Ukrainians met in the home of Ephraim Pritzkau, the father of Johann Pritzkau. Besides prayer and singing, Johann interpreted the gospel text in Russian.²⁴ In addition, some Mennonite Brethren engaged in personal witness to Ukrainians that led to conversions; some provided Christian literature.²⁵

With Ukrainians becoming evangelical believers, it was inevitable that the question of their practicing believer's baptism would arise. It was no simple matter. The law forbade proselytism of the Orthodox, which, of course, included their baptism as a believer. One who performed such a baptism faced severe penalties – possibly imprisonment, exile to Siberia, or deportation from the country. A few Mennonite Brethren, however, took the bold step of beginning to immerse Ukrainian believers.

In 1862 a Ukrainian servant in the home of Heinrich Hübert was immersed. Hübert refused to provide the name of the baptizer and was, for a time, imprisoned and then placed under village arrest. The boldest Mennonite Brethren to immerse was Gerhard Wieler, one who had baptized German believers in Neu-Danzig in 1864, which in turn led to the exile of numbers of them to Turkish jurisdiction. In 1863 and 1864 on two different occasions, Wieler baptized two Ukrainians and, for a time, was imprisoned at Ekaterinoslav.²⁶

²² For Oncken's letters of his trip to Russia in English, see *Quarterly Reporter*, January 1870, pp. 797-806.

²³ For an excellent survey of the beginning and spread of Russian stundism, see Michael Klimenko, *Anfänge des Baptismus in Südrussland (Ukraine) nach offiziellen Dokumenten* (Doctoral dissertation, Friedrich-Alexander Universität, Erlangen, 1957).

²⁴ For the influence of the Pritzkaus, father and son, see the Russian critic, A Ya Dorodnitsyn, 'Nemetskie missionery neobaptizma (Neo-Baptismus) izvestnago pod imenem shtundy na yuge Rossii', *Chteniya v obshchestve lyubitelei dukhovnago prosveshcheniya*, 1893, no. 3, pp. 337-47.

²⁵ See John B. Toews, 'Early Mennonite Brethren and Evangelism in Russia', *Direction* 28.2 (Fall, 1999), pp. 187-200, in which he used the 1864 investigative report of Alexander K. Brune produced for the Minister of Internal Affairs.

²⁶ For immersions by Mennonite Brethren, see Toews, 'Early Mennonite Brethren', pp. 195-96; Gerhard Wieler, 'Memorandum', in Jakob P. Bekker, *Origin of The Mennonite Brethren Church* (Hillsboro, KS:

Whatever the number of Mennonite Brethren baptisms of Ukrainians, and there may have been others, none of them resulted in the establishment of a Ukrainian Baptist movement until the baptism in Alt-Danzig in June, 1869. This was the area where the Pritzkaus were conducting stundist meetings with Ukrainians present. Several months before June, a letter from the area recorded crowded prayer services in which people cried out for God's mercy. It also noted, 'Even Russian hired men and servant girls attend the meetings' and that '...also in all the adjacent country there is a great awakening among both Germans and Russians'.²⁷

It is not surprising that in such a revival atmosphere Ukrainian believers would be eager for baptism. The opportunity for such a baptism occurred on 11 June 1869 (o.s.) when Johann Unger, the Mennonite leader from Chortitsa, had come to Alt-Danzig to baptize a large group of German believers. After careful examination of the candidates, which took some days, the baptism was finally ready to proceed. A group of both Germans and Ukrainians observed Unger who read from the Gospel, joined in song with those present, and then, with prayer, immersed each candidate one by one. But one of those baptized was a Ukrainian, Efim Tsimbal, who, unexamined, slipped in line and, according to Johann Pritzkau, who knew Tsimbal well, was supposedly inadvertently baptized by Unger. In his report of the baptism in 1869 Pritzkau claimed eighty-nine were baptized but with no mention of Tsimbal. In a letter from him in 1870 in which he stated fifty were baptized, he finally mentioned Tsimbal's baptism.²⁸

But was Tsimbal's baptism inadvertent?—a question which Michael Klimenko raised almost fifty years ago in his dissertation.²⁹ According to the Russian report, the village magistrate himself was suspect and found himself in trouble for failing to stop Tsimbal. Why did Unger baptize an outsider rather than Johann Pritzkau, a native of the area who knew all the candidates and had only recently been ordained for mission service by Oncken? In fact, Pritzkau was baptizing a short time later. Was it expedient to have an outsider, who could claim he did not know the candidates

Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of the Midwest, 1973), pp. 142-51; and Lawrence Klippenstein, (ed.), 'Johann Wieler (1839-1889) Among Russian Evangelicals: A New Source of Mennonites and Evangelicalism in Imperial Russia', *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 5 (1987), p. 48.

²⁷ *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, September 1869, pp. 360-61.

²⁸ For the Russian report of Tsimbal's baptism, in which it was claimed thirty were baptized, see *Materialy dlya istorii religioznago dvizheniya na yuge Rossii vo vtoroi polovine xix veka*, in *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, September 1908, no. 58, pp. 71-72. For Johann Pritzkau's reports, see *Quarterly Reporter*, October 1869, pp. 394-95, and July, 1870, p. 837, and Pritzkau, *Geschichte*, pp. 13-14.

²⁹ See Klimenko, *Anfänge*, pp. 62-64.

personally? Was it so much on the spur of the moment when probably Tsimball was also baptized with a linen gown as the others? By the way, Unger left the same day for his home. At least Pritzkau could not be charged with illegally baptizing a Ukrainian, which could mean exile to Siberia.

Whatever the circumstances, Tsimbal's baptism led to a chain of baptisms that helped to establish the Stundo-Baptist movement among Ukrainians. Tsimbal soon baptized three others and then twenty-one more. One of Tsimbal's candidates in 1870 was Ivan G. Ryaboshapka, who in turn in 1871 baptized Mikhail T. Ratushnyi of Ossnovo. Both Ryaboshapka and Ratushnyi became noted leaders in the new movement.

Caucasus

The migration in 1861 of Martin K. Kalweit (1833-1918) 1,800 miles from Congress Poland to the area of Tiflis (today Tbilisi in the country of Georgia), resulted, unforeseen at the time, in a significant projection of Baptist witness into the Caucasus. Kalweit was a German of Lithuanian extraction but born a Russian subject in Kovno Province near the Russian-German border. He was baptized in 1858 at Ickschen near Ragnit in East Prussia, not far from the Russian border. Ickschen was then a mission station of the great mission church at Memel. Kalweit arrived with his wife and two sisters, weary and poor, receiving a rather indifferent reception from his wealthy relatives.³⁰

Kalweit felt very isolated and almost abandoned, even at first fearing the Russian people. He nevertheless established a time for worship. Some years later in July 1869 he wrote that his little group now numbered eleven with the addition of two newly baptized, including a Russian who was blind from infancy. In the services both German and Russian were used in word and song.

But of great importance for the furtherance of the Baptist work in the Caucasus was Kalweit's baptism, on 20 August 1867 (o.s.) in Tiflis of Nikita I. Voronin (1840—1905), a Molokan who was searching the scripture and wanted to be baptized. The Molokans were a native Russian sect that rejected the sacraments of the Orthodox Church. Voronin began preaching among his fellow Molokans and by 1871 had a group of ten.

³⁰ For Kalweit's early life and his arrival and early activity in the Tiflis area, see *Baptist*, August, 1908, pp. 20-22; *Missionsblatt*, October, 1868, p. 160, and September, 1869, pp. 129-32; *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, January, 1870, pp. 19-21; and *Der Wahrheitszeuge*, May 15, 1884, p. 109.

Kalweit's group began to break up at this time and joined the Voronin body.³¹

The Baptist work in the Caucasus recruited other outstanding converts who became leading evangelists. One was Ivan (Johann) V. Kargel, baptized in 1869 by Voronin, who, as already noted, became a German Baptist pastor in St. Petersburg and who later joined the Evangelical Christians. Two others were Vasiliï G. Pavlov (1854-1924) and Vasiliï V. Ivanov (1846-1919), Molokans who were baptized in 1871. Both Kargel and Pavlov studied with Oncken in Hamburg.

Conclusion

In spite of persecution, particularly of the Ukrainian and Russian Baptists, Baptists continued to grow. In the 1870s Slavic Baptists in Ukraine and Caucasus found each other. They corresponded, and Pavlov himself visited the Ukrainian brethren. In 1884, under the leadership of Johann Wieler, the brother of Gerhard Wieler, delegates formed the Russian Baptist Union. Three years later in 1887 the German Baptists in the Empire withdrew from the Baptist Union of Germany and formed the Union of Baptist Churches in Russia, incorporating not only German Baptists in Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic area but also non-German Latvians and Estonians.

In 1879 the Russian regime granted legal recognition to the German Baptists. On the other hand, beginning in the 1880s, the Slavic Stundists/Baptists experienced intense persecution for about twenty years. Finally in 1905 the czar granted toleration to all dissidents.

In 1902 the German Union in Russia reported, in spite of heavy emigration, around 22,000 members.³² At the European Baptist Congress in Berlin in 1908, Pavlov estimated that the Russian Baptist Union numbered 20,000.³³ In addition, a separate Evangelical Christian movement under Ivan S. Prokhanov (1869-1935) was emerging. Although the figures are not spectacular, they were a basis for significant growth in later years. It is remarkable how Baptists, without any grand strategy, appeared in such a comparatively short time in so many widely separated areas.

³¹ For the beginnings of the Kalweit and Voronin groups, see *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, January, 1870, pp. 20-21; *Istoriya Evangel'skikh Khristian-Baptistov v SSSR* (Moscow: All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, 1989), pp. 74-76; 'Shesidesyatiletie, 1867-1927', *Baptist*, 1927, no. 5, pp. 13-14; and *Bratskii vestnik*, 1957, no. 3, p. 28.

³² *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, April 1903, p. 126.

³³ European Baptist Congress, *Proceedings*, 1908, p. 159.

What were the factors for their successful penetration? Some would argue that Baptists came ‘in the fullness of time’—the times were right socially, religiously, and politically. One might also point to the great value of the German bridge into the Russian Empire, and it was. In addition, a number of unforeseen circumstances, whether coincidental or providential, are startling.

Although all the above factors played a role, at the same time a new movement should have vision, passion, leadership and something significant to offer the population. Baptists had all these features going for them. The movement began and continued with prayer. Passion for the lost was uppermost. In spite of critical remarks, the writer in the *Königsberger Zeitung* in East Prussia in November 1851 pointed out that Baptists attracted outsiders with their sermons, their ‘very melodious singing’, and ‘by a constant prominence being given to conversion and repentance... rather than by the subtle definitions of religious sentiments....’³⁴

Foreign missionaries who, in any case, were outlawed, were not the primary agents in spreading the Baptist message in Russia. It was the personal witness of laypersons and indigenous evangelists, beginning generally in their twenties, whether they were German-Russian, Baltic, Ukrainian, or Russian, who carried most of the work. It is not to say, however, that Baptists abroad did not play supporting roles. Oncken himself and other Baptists from Germany brought both inspiration and needed expertise to the fledgling Baptist and Mennonite Brethren movements. Financial assistance also came from abroad, particularly from Germany, the United Kingdom and the USA. A most valuable foreign resource for leadership was the missionary school of Oncken in Hamburg, which provided training for a number of Baptist leaders in the Empire. In many respects, a proper balance was maintained between evangelical forces from within and from without. In any case, the penetration of Baptists into the Russian Empire is an inspiring story and a model for today.

Dr Albert W Wardin, Jr. is a renowned Baptist historian.³⁵

³⁴ *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, March, 1852, p. 78.

³⁵ Albert W. Wardin is well known to readers of this journal because of his splendid introduction to Baptist life, country by country, *Baptists Around the World: A Comprehensive Handbook* (1995) and his amazingly thorough bibliography and commentary, *Evangelical Sectarianism in the Russian Empire and the USSR* (1995). We are greatly in his debt. In this issue we are pleased to include an article from Albert Wardin which was presented as a paper at the International Conference on Baptist Studies in 2006, held at Acadia University, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Central and Eastern European Association for Mission Studies

The Central and Eastern European Association for Mission Studies (CEEAMS) is organising a conference for Central and Eastern European missiologists in Papa, Hungary from 6 – 10 June 2007. The major focus of the conference will be the current situation of the church and mission in the countries of the region as well as the need to network between different missiologists, theological institutions and churches in their mission thinking and praxis.

History and present standing of CEEAMS

CEEAMS gathers together scholars in mission studies who are actively involved and work in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). All the countries in this area were historically part of the Warsaw Pact and thus their missiologists have a relatively short history. Spontaneous meetings of individuals and groups of missiologists started in the early 1990s and grew as the need arose for more regular meetings and exchange of research and practical experience.

An important factor for mission in this region is the common reality of post-communism with its different faces and some nationalistic developments in the region. In discussions the issues of minority ethnic groups and issues of immigrants have arisen. Another important issue is the possibility of practical mission in and by the people of the region and partnerships with expatriate missionaries and missiologists. A third major issue is the place of mission education in the theological faculties in CEE, and, fourthly, the need for dialogue and networking between missiologists in the region from different geopolitical and church contexts.

At the beginning of the third millennium (2001-2002) CEEAMS was initiated by a core group of missiologists representing countries such as Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia and Croatia, with participants representing various church communities such as Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Mennonite, and others from a historic and free church tradition. The first gatherings were devoted to mission in theological education and issues of ethnic minorities (such as Roma). At the forthcoming conference, two major issues will be: (1) Current issues of missiology in Central and Eastern Europe with some emphasis on

education in mission, and (2) Preparation for the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) in Budapest, Hungary, 2008, which is the international umbrella organisation of CEEAMS.

CEEAMS and IAMS share the following aims:

- To promote the scholarly study of theological, historical and practical questions relating to mission in Central and Eastern Europe;
- To disseminate information concerning mission among all those engaged in such studies and among the general public;
- To relate studies in mission to studies in theological and other disciplines;
- To promote fellowship, cooperation and mutual assistance in mission studies;
- To organise international conferences of missiologists;
- To encourage the creation of centres of research;
- Finally, to stimulate publications in missiology.

The organisation is in its early stages and needs promotional activities and encouragement to build a stronger network and involve more missiologists from the region.

Conference participation

In order to build a network of missiologists in the region, the Executive Committee of CEEAMS has planned a meeting in June 2007, which will also help to prepare for the IAMS meeting in 2008, to connect missiologists from Central and Eastern Europe, to pinpoint the issues and share insights and experiences from the region. The CEEAMS Executive expects between 30 and 40 missiologists to participate in the June meeting, representing all or most of the regions and churches.

Several reports and papers about mission research and praxis shared during the conference will be published in the CEEAMS journal.

Papers that deal with current issues of mission in Central and Eastern Europe are welcome. Please contact Father Dr Vladimir Feodorov (vffedriv@gmail.com) or Dr Peter F. Penner (penner@ibts.cz) if you would like to contribute a paper or seminar.

Call for Papers for the X. International Bonhoeffer Congress, Prague, 22 – 27 July 2008

The planning committee of the X. International Bonhoeffer Congress cordially invites you to propose papers. The theme will be:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Theology in Today's World: A Way between Fundamentalism and Secularism?

The conference will especially concentrate on Bonhoeffer's prison theology, though not wanting to exclude his other writings. It wants to find answers to the question: How can Bonhoeffer's prison theology be helpful in a world confronted by fundamentalism as well as by secularism. How does it prevent the church from being a fundamentalist one or from becoming totally secular? There will be main speakers during the morning sessions and seminars in the afternoon. The three working days of the conference will have the following topics:

Wednesday, 23 July

Fundamentalism and Secularism

In the morning, speakers will analyse the current phenomena of religious fundamentalism and secularism (the latter especially in Eastern Europe).

Proposals are invited for the afternoon seminar dealing with the question: How could Bonhoeffer's theology generally help to guide a path in the current situation of fundamentalism and secularism.

Friday, 25 July

The church – 'in the middle of the village'? (30.4.1944)

Subthemes:

- The shape of the church, the church's liturgy and worship;
- Spirituality;
- Education and teaching in today's schools, churches and universities;
- Mission
- Social justice

Papers are invited that deal with the consequences of Bonhoeffer's prison theology for the concrete life and work of the church in a society confronted by fundamentalism and secularism (including the named subthemes).

Saturday, 26 July

**The church – in ‘the open air of intellectual discussion’
(3.8.1944)**

Subthemes:

- Political discussions;
- Interreligious dialogue;
- Bioethics;
- Ecoethics;
- Peace ethics.

Papers are invited that deal with the consequences of Bonhoeffer's prison theology. The emphasis is on the forms and the means through which the church should participate in the current discussions of our different societies which are confronted by fundamentalism and secularism (including the named subthemes).

Proposals on topics not mentioned but which relate to other writings of Bonhoeffer are also welcome.

Younger scholars, e.g. PhD students, are encouraged to propose papers. The proposals, which should explain the topic, main arguments and conclusion, should have no more than 500 words. They can be written in German or English. The presentation at the conference can be in Czech, English or German. Proposals must be submitted by 30 June 2007 to christiane.tietz@uni-tuebingen.de, to whom further questions should be addressed. A small committee will decide which papers they accept and will communicate their decision by email by the end of August 2007.

Book Reviews

Keith G. Jones and Parush R. Parushev

Currents in Baptist Theology of Worship Today

Prague: IBTS, 2007, 180 pp.

This is another fine contribution to the series of occasional publications from IBTS which are opening up new areas in the overall field of Baptist identity in the contemporary world. A conference on the theme of worship in Baptist life, which was organised by a team of those involved in Applied Theology at IBTS, led to the production of this volume. It brings together papers by nine authors, all of them involved in church life and ministry as well as in theological reflection.

Keith Jones sets the scene in the first essay, which contains a provocative call for ‘abandoning public worship’. Instead of public worship, which has civic overtones, or private worship, only for the elect, Keith Jones argues for ‘porous worship’ – which has, at its core, covenanted believers engaging together, but with others welcome to ‘come and see’. A number of trends and ideas are then unpacked in absorbing detail in the next two chapters by Chris Ellis, now pastor of West Bridgford Baptist Church, Nottingham, England, and formerly Principal of Bristol Baptist College. Chris Ellis, like Keith Jones, has been a significant influence on the renewal of thinking about baptistic worship.

As is always the case in publications from IBTS – and this is part of what makes them such a rich resource – Central and Eastern European contributors, as well as those from Western Europe, are well represented. Alexander Kozynko, who was the Rector of the Moscow Baptist Theological Seminary, offers a panoramic biblical vision of ‘Worship in Spirit and Truth’. Ivana Noble from the Czech Republic, who teaches part-time at IBTS in addition to her teaching at the Evangelical Theological Faculty at Charles University, contributes an illuminating study of ecumenical worship, focussing especially on the work of the Russian Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann. Deftly drawing from a wide range of material, Lina Andronovienė, who is Director of the Non-Residential School of the Baptist Union of Lithuania and course leader in Applied Theology at IBTS, probes crucial issues about hymns and songs in Baptist worship. And Meego Remel from Estonia, a pastor and lecturer, reaches back into Anabaptist history in a fascinating analysis of the early Anabaptist hymnbook, the *Ausbund*.

Further perspectives are offered by Nathan Nettleton, who explores ritual and narrative structure in worship. Nathan Nettleton is an innovative pastor at South Yarra Community Baptist Church in Melbourne, Australia. From the USA, John D. Erickson, former pastor of the Brickyard Bible Church, Chicago, and a visiting lecturer at the Evangelical Theological Seminary, Osijek, Croatia, examines preaching as worship. Finally Tony Peck, the General Secretary of the EBF and the chair of the committee on worship and music at the BWA Congress in 2005, uses his unique position in Europe, and his considerable expertise, to look at music in European Baptist worship. His title, 'Music which gives the heart most play', drawn from a comment attributed to C.H. Spurgeon in which he advocated such music, in itself says something about Baptist worship. For Baptists true worship has never been a matter only of the externals; it has always had to do with the heart.

Compared with a number of other denominations, Baptists have produced a rather limited amount of substantial writing on worship within our tradition. This is not because worship has been unimportant; indeed the commitment to freedom from imposed worship patterns was one of the reasons for the emergence and development of the Free Church tradition. But much Baptist worship, seen in this volume as an expression of 'first-order theology', has not been given sustained 'second-order' theological attention. Where that has been done, it has often been done only in one cultural-geographical context. It is its cross-cultural analysis of worship and its determined connecting of 'first-order' and 'second-order' Baptist theology in this particular area that makes this such a valuable and exciting volume.

The Revd Dr Ian Randall
Senior Research Fellow, IBTS

Rollin G. Grams and Parush R. Parushev, eds.

Towards an Understanding of European Baptist Identity: Listening to the Churches in Armenia, Bulgaria, Central Asia, Moldova, North Caucasus, Omsk Region and Poland

Mapping Baptist Identity Series, Volume 2
IBTS, Prague, 196 pp.

Another statistical analysis? Not quite. This work, undertaken by staff and associates of IBTS, has a clear agenda that is not centred on figures and ratios. True, a good part of the book, possibly 50%, is given over to

painstaking analysis of a questionnaire offered to samples of Christians, from central Europe to central Asia, all within the European Baptist Federation (EBF) catchment area. But there's an ideological and profoundly theological reasoning behind the methodology.

This is an early expression of a deliberate and exciting project, seeking to engage in theology in a way that is both Baptist and post foundational: baptistic theology. Here we find a profound confidence in the testimony of scripture at the heart of a Christ centred, gathering Church, looking to the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit at work in the midst. The scriptures central. The Church believed in. God trusted to be faithful. It is this convictional basis which provides the framework for this analysis of the varied flavours and styles of theology and churchmanship within the EBF.

This reviewer distrusts statistics, and is wary of attempts to form conclusions from them. So too with these authors! They manage the statistics not to prove, but to awaken awareness and alert readers to issues that deserve further attention. Again and again, they stress their desire is not to reach conclusions, but to spot and trace indicators of identity, epistemology, methodology and missionality identifiable within the EBF context.

Seven sample regions are looked at, using the results of surveys undertaken in 2002-03. Each chapter begins with an editorial overview of the region, a backdrop of church within culture and context. There follows an evaluation of theological, moral, leadership, church and cultural issues which results to the questionnaire would suggest are indicative of the survey and pertinent to that region. The chapters then conclude with a summary and evaluation of the region, which usefully combines a synthesis of conclusions based on the statistical results with helpful comment and assessment by the theological editors, all of whom have considerable experience of cross-cultural ecclesial and missional activity in the regions analysed.

The third section of each chapter, providing an analysis of contextual pressures and convictional suppositions, combined with a closing chapter propounding the genius behind 'baptistic, contextual theology', will be of special interest to the analytical and constructive theologian who wants to formulate a working method of testing what lies at the theological heart of a recognisable culture and context.

If there is a weakness to be found in this work, it lies in the size of the samples taken from each of the regions, and in the age range of

respondents. Again, it is sometimes hard to identify the rational behind some of the questions in the survey. Vocabulary is at times ponderous and this reviewer would have found it more helpful if all questions had been framed, as some specifically were, with reference to a recognisable theological system. This said, these are weaknesses that are identified and recognised by the authors within the work itself. Why? Because this work is not designed as a *magnum opus*, nor intended to provide a definitive conclusion. It is, rather, the beginning of a journey of exploration.

Here is a case study *par excellence* in baptistic theology. It is indicative of a methodology that those interested in the health of the church can and should be excited about. To read it is to be liberated into a new way of doing theology. And that, quite apart from engaging with meticulous and honest scholarship, is a very good reason for reading it.

The Revd Dr Jim Purves

Senior Minister, Bristo Baptist Church, Edinburgh, Scotland

Directors' Conference, 22-26 August 2007

Trends and Challenges of Congregational Leadership

Since 2001, IBTS and its Institute for Systematic Study of Contextual Theologies has been bringing scholars and practitioners together for continuing reflection on features of baptistic identity in a European context. This conference follows earlier ones on Discipleship and Character Formation (2001), Practices of Ministry of the Church in a Post... world (2002), Doing Constructive Theologies in a Baptistic Way (2003), Dynamics of Primary and Secondary Theologies in Baptistic Communities (2004), Currents in Baptistic Theology of Worship (2005) and The Church's Role with Concerns for the Environment (2006).

The conference is facilitated by Doc Dr Parush R Parushev and Rector Keith G Jones of IBTS. The organisers are inviting participants to explore together the present realities of leadership in a European baptistic context, taking a particular look at the unresolved tensions in the area of leadership in congregational-type faith communities.

In many parts of Europe and the world, Baptists are committed to intentional Christian living in gathering convictional communities of disciples of Christ. Their minority status almost inevitably calls forth this form of life. Yet on the other hand, Baptists often suffer from uncritically importing top-down leadership patterns either from a dominant ecclesial tradition or the surrounding (Communist, libertarian capitalist, managerial business) culture. The purpose of the conference is to ask whether there are any other ways of leadership more in tune with Baptist roots in the Radical Reformation, and whether some correctives may be offered to baptistic communities and leadership patterns in order to enable them to be more faithful to their calling and ministry.

Speakers include **Linas Andronovas** (Lithuania), **Keith G Jones** (UK/Czech Republic), **Jan Kornholt** (Denmark), **Petros Malakian** (Armenia), **Parush Parushev** (Bulgaria/Czech Republic), **Andrew Rollinson** (Scotland), and others.

If you would like to register for this conference please email Lake@ibts.cz